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重新銘刻帝國主義：閱讀潔西卡·海格荃《夢叢林》

Reinscribing Imperialism:

Reading Jessica Hagedorn's *Dream Jungle*

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Abstract

Jessica Hagedorn's novel *Dream Jungle*, published in 2003, is a key literary text that re-presents the colonial and neo-colonial relationship between the US and the Philippines. The narrative in *Dream Jungle* follows two events in 1970s Philippines: the discovery of a supposedly Paleolithic tribe, and the arrival of an American crew to shoot a Vietnam War movie. Both of these fictionalized events are based upon actual historical moments in the Philippines: the Tasaday "Hoax" in 1971 and the shooting of the film *Apocalypse Now* from 1976 to 1977. Following Hagedorn, I have opted to focus on each of these events separately in Chapter Two and Three. This arrangement has allowed me to allocate the space to address these events and the questions that they provoke in a more comprehensive manner. At the same time, through the concept of reinscription, I have also endeavored to highlight the way that these two seemingly different and unrelated topics are in fact intertwined and connected with each other.

In the study of the Tasaday "Hoax," my thesis is less concerned with the questions of authenticity and identity, and more with the modes of representation that bears responsibility both for the formation and the disavowal of the Tasaday/Taobo story. I turn to the work of Victor Li to identify an attribute and ideal—that of primitivism—which has persisted throughout the Tasaday incident. Drawing upon Li, I argue that the Tasaday/Taobo story can be read as a re-enactment or embodiment of neo-primitivism.

In my attempt to draw the seemingly unrelated film shoot into this discussion, I turned toward the titular "reinscription," which is the term utilized by Edward Said to indicate a form of resistance, a way for the colonized subject to reshape and respond to narratives from the metropole. However, the "re-inscription" from Peter Hulme in *Colonial Encounters*, where it is used to highlight the way that old and new




discourses co-exist in unstable competition, suggests a reading that takes account of unresolved tensions that may be unavoidable in the Saidian “reinscriptions”. Reading from this trajectory, my thesis critically examines a line of representations starting from Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*, Francis Ford Coppola’s *Apocalypse Now*, to the documentary *Hearts of Darkness: A Filmmaker’s Apocalypse* and *Notes on the Making of Apocalypse Now* from Eleanor Coppola, and finally, Jessica Hagedorn’s *Dream Jungle*. In each of these texts, my thesis argues, the reinscription—the Saidian resistance—is shadowed by a re-inscription that marks them as ambivalent and complicit with the discourse they set out to critique, and Hagedorn is no exception.

In the conclusion, I turn to the question of choosing the *Dream Jungle*—a Filipino-American novel—as a topic of research in Taiwan, the perceived gap between the Philippines and Taiwan, the recent strifes that soured our relationship, but also the connections and parallels that link us in unexpected places. Drawing upon the recent works of Chih-ming Wang regarding the question of doing Asian American research in Asia, I position my thesis in this context as an attempt to follow Wang’s call for reconceptualization and dialogue between trans-pacific locations.

Keywords: Jessica Hagedorn’s *Dream Jungle*, Tasaday Hoax, Francis Ford Coppola’s *Apocalypse Now*, Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*, primitivism, reinscription, Asian American studies.

摘要



潔西卡·海格荖的小說《夢叢林》於2003年出版；此文本再現了美國和菲律賓之間的殖民主義和新殖民主義關係。小說描述在1970年代菲律賓的兩個事件：一個新發現的舊石器時代部落，以及美國劇組前來拍攝越戰電影。這兩個故事都改編自真實的歷史事件：1971年的塔薩代人「騙局」，及法蘭西斯·柯波拉從1976年至1977年拍攝的電影《現代啟示錄》。忠於海格荖小說的格式，我選擇在第二和第三章中分別一次研究一個事件，這讓我有足夠空間來詳細探討這些事件和它們引申出的議題。透過「重新銘刻」概念，我凸顯出這兩個看似不同且不相關的主題，其實是相互纏繞和連接著。

研究塔薩代人「騙局」時，本論文關心的不是其真實性和身份認同的問題，而是各種形式的媒介媒體在整樁事件中的定位和責任，尤其是期間它們從炒作以致於最後推翻否定塔薩代人之間的運作。我依照Victor Li的論述，檢視出在整個塔薩代人事件中不斷浮現的一種原始主義。有鑑於此，本論文將塔薩代人在歷史中和小說中的故事理解為一個新原始主義的重演或體現。

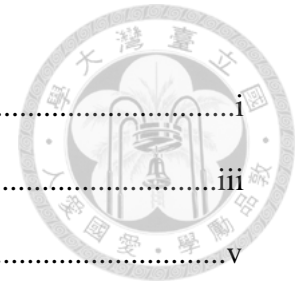
我嘗試將看似無關的電影拍攝事件帶進討論時，引用了「重新銘刻」概念；愛德華·薩伊德以此詞來表示一種抵抗，一種殖民主體將中心的敘事重塑和回應的一個過程。然而彼得·赫爾姆(Peter Hulme)在著作中使用的「重新—銘刻」概念，卻是用來強調舊的和新的論述共存於不穩定的競爭關係中。因此，本論文的閱讀方式將著重於薩伊德所謂重新銘刻著作中並未解決的一些矛盾，以批判性的角度檢視一系列互相連結的文本；從約瑟夫·康拉德的《黑暗之心》，法蘭西斯·柯波拉的電影《現代啟示錄》，愛琳諾·科波拉的紀錄片《黑暗之心：製片人的啟示錄》和《Notes on the Making of Apocalypse Now》，和潔西卡·海格荖的

小說《夢叢林》。我的論文指出，這些薩伊德式的重新銘刻反抗中同時不免包含了某種重新—銘刻，導致這一串的文本和它們所批判的論述之間無法切割，甚至淪為共謀，而海格荅也不例外。

在最後，本論文探討到選擇《夢叢林》此菲裔美國文本作為研究的挑戰，考慮到台灣與菲律賓之間的表面上的差距，近期兩國惡化的關係，但也指出兩方在意想不到的地方其實是互相連接呼應。王智明在近期探討了在亞洲研究亞美文學的議題，並呼籲重新檢視亞美研究以及建立跨太平洋地區之間的交流。本論文的研究定位可視為在嘗試著回應他的號召。

關鍵字：潔西卡·海格荅《夢叢林》、塔薩代人騙局、法蘭西斯·柯波拉《現代啟示錄》、約瑟夫·康拉德《黑暗之心》、原始主義、重新銘刻、亞美研究

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Chapter One



Introduction

On April 25th, 1898, the United States declared war against the waning Spanish Empire. By May 1st, their fighting had extended into the Pacific, specifically to the Philippines. Filipino revolutionaries were already struggling against Spanish colonial rule, so the US military quickly contacted their leader—President Emilio Aguinaldo—to establish an informal alliance. However, this cooperation soured when the US signed a treaty with the Spanish finalizing the annexation of the Philippines under American control. The Spanish colonizers were gone, but now the Americans had taken their place. Instead of ending hostilities, the Treaty of Paris (1898) sparked a vicious war between the former allies: the undeclared Philippine-American War, which dragged on for three more years, during which the American army deployed scorched earth tactics and set up concentration camps. According to Sen. George F. Hoar in his 1902 speech to the 57th US Congress condemning the conflict, an estimated 600,000 Filipino civilians were killed during this time in Luzon and Batangas (qtd. in Rodríguez 135).


The American occupation and colonial governance of the Philippines would continue for almost fifty years until 1946, when Philippine Independence was finally recognized. Nonetheless, American military bases continued to exist in the island nation through the signing of treaties and leases. In their heyday, the Clark Air Base and the US Navy Base Subic Bay on Luzon Island were known as the largest US military installments overseas, until a volcano eruption in 1991 closed down the former, whereas the latter was abandoned after rising local dissent forced the

Philippine government to discontinue the lease agreement with the US in 1992.¹ However, as Bruce Cumings accurately observed in 2009, even after such occasional setbacks, the sprawling network of US overseas bases “persists because it is politically and culturally invisible, at least to Americans” (393). Cumings’s assessment became a self-fulfilling prophesy when recent developments in 2012 saw the informal return of the US navy back to the Subic Bay installations, following heightened tensions concerning the PRC’s territorial claims.² Moreover, the assistance from US forces following the disaster of Typhoon Haiyan in November 2013 has in some accounts improved the Filipino public perception of US military presence. According to political scientist Michael Buehler, these changes could pave the way for an increase in US troops in the Philippines. Buehler is quoted in a *Christian Science Monitor* article on November 13th, 2013, where he also states that the “American government is going to be very careful not to be seen to exploit the situation.” The article, however, points to several other instances in which the US has benefited from natural disasters in Asia, such as the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami in Indonesia and the “Operation Tomodachi” relief following the 2011 Fukushima disaster in Japan. This thesis consequently positions itself at a crucial moment where the relationship between the Philippines and the US is once again being re-inscribed and urgently requires our thorough re-examination.

The basis and starting point of this thesis project is Jessica Hagedorn’s 2003 novel *Dream Jungle*, a key literary text that re-presents the colonial and neo-colonial

¹ The history of these US bases is detailed in Chalmers Johnson’s *The Sorrows of Empire*; see especially 212-14.

² James “Bong” Gordon, the then-mayor of Olongapo (the city next to Subic Bay), was interviewed and quoted by the *Sydney Morning Herald* in a report on November 20th, 2012, proclaiming that “[w]e’re open for business. No matter what you call it . . . a base or semi-permanent hosting or whatever, the U.S. is back.” And on June 27th, 2013, a Reuters article quoted Roberto Garcia, chairman of the Subic Bay Metropolitan Authority, who confirmed plans for new bases and noted a sharp increase in US military port calls to Subic in 2013; see Mogato.



relationship between the US and the Philippines. Hagedorn was born and raised in the Philippines, before moving to San Francisco at the age of fourteen. She describes herself as a hybrid, born to a Scotch-Irish-French-Filipino mother and a Filipino Spanish father who has some Chinese blood on the side.³ Hagedorn has worked with multiple mediums, having dabbled in acting and playwriting as well as lyric writing. She is an influential figure within Asian American literary circles, editing volumes such as *Charlie Chan Is Dead: An Anthology of Contemporary Asian American Fiction* (1993) and *Charlie Chan Is Dead 2: At Home in the World* (2004). Her literary texts include poetry and prose as collected in *Danger and Beauty* (1993) as well as novels such as *Dogeaters* (1990), *The Gangster of Love* (1996), and *Dream Jungle* (2003). More recently, she published *Toxicology* (2011), a work of fiction that departs from the issues of race and the Asian American concerns explored within her earlier works, and instead contemplates the question of devoting one's life to art. This thesis project will focus on the texts most relevant to the topic of imperialism, resistance and reinscription, in particular Hagedorn's novel *Dream Jungle*.

The narrative in *Dream Jungle* follows two events in the 1970s, both located in the Philippines during the dictatorship of Ferdinand Marcos (1965-1986): the discovery of a supposedly Paleolithic tribe in 1971 by a rich Spanish mestizo named Zamora, and the arrival of an American crew to shoot a Vietnam War movie in 1977. Both of these fictionalized events are based upon actual historical moments in the Philippines, drawing their reference from the Tasaday "Hoax" orchestrated by Manuel Elizalde and the shooting of the film *Apocalypse Now* (1979) directed by Francis Ford Coppola. My reading will direct attention to this strategy of embedding history into fiction to question whether it constitutes simply an aesthetic and postmodern gesture,

³ This description is taken from the 1995 article, "An Interview with Jessica Hagedorn" by Kay Bonetti.

or whether it can be viewed as a meaningful act of reinscription which exposes and reworks a variety of colonial and postcolonial discourses. By examining the events and texts implicated within Hagedorn's text, I will investigate the potential for subversion and opportunities to envision alternatives.



The term *reinscription* can be somewhat difficult to define, due to the multitude of contexts in which it can be found. Drawing its roots from the Derridean concept of the palimpsest, the act of reinscription conveys a sense of writing over existing texts, an attempt to place a text under-erasure by crossing out the original but still leaving it coherent and intelligible.⁴ On a more specifically postcolonial level, Edward Said provides a valuable and comprehensive exposition of this term in his magisterial study *Culture and Imperialism* (1993), defining reinscription as an act

to rechart and then occupy the place in imperial cultural forms reserved for subordination, to occupy it self-consciously, fighting for it on the very same territory once ruled by a consciousness that assumed the subordination of a designated inferior other. (210)

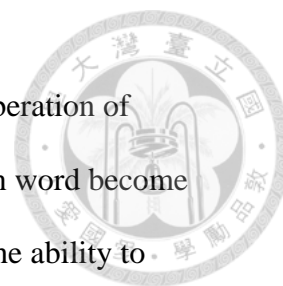
In other words, reinscription for colonized subjects entails examining and taking back narratives from the metropole as a form of resistance that contends for the right of representation. Instead of being simply a reaction and opposition, these resistant reinscriptions are in Said's argument "an alternative way of conceiving human history," an epistemology that "writes back" to the empire (216).

At this point, Said is drawing upon the 1989 book *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-colonial Literatures* by Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin, a study that emphasizes the significance of writing in the process of colonization as well as the decolonization that follows. This book provides an

⁴ See Derrida's *Dissemination* (1972) and *Positions* (1972). A more comprehensive discussion will be found in Chapter Three.

explanation of the act of “writing back” by pointing out that

[t]he seizing of the means of communication and the liberation of post-colonial writing by the appropriation of the written word become crucial features of the process of self-assertion and of the ability to reconstruct the world as an unfolding historical process. (81)



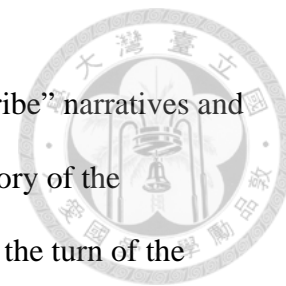
The Empire Writes Back, however, is highly controversial for its broad application of the “post-colonial” category “to cover all the culture affected by the imperial process from the moment of colonization to the present day” (2). In fact, a detailed list of the countries that would fall under this coverage is provided in their introduction:

So the literatures of African countries, Australia, Bangladesh, Canada, Caribbean countries, India, Malaysia, Malta, New Zealand, Pakistan, Singapore, South Pacific Island countries, and Sri Lanka are all post-colonial literatures. The literature of the USA should also be placed in this category. (2)

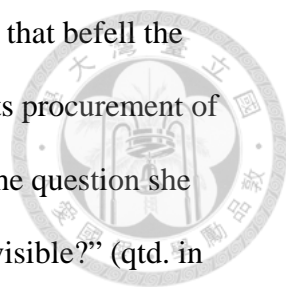
Perhaps unsurprisingly, this casual inclusion of the US was met with criticism and suspicion.⁵ This thesis, however, is less concerned with what is included in this list, and more with what is missing from it. There is a noticeable lack in this lineup of Southeast and East Asian postcolonies, particularly those that are implicated in the following discussions: the Philippines, Vietnam, and even Cambodia were all formally victims of European colonialism, followed by military interventions from US imperialism. My thesis therefore will attempt to extend the project of Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin to include these countries and representations that cut across these locations.

⁵ A thoughtful response to the controversy generated by *The Empire Writes Back* can be found in Peter Hulme’s 1995 essay “Including America.”

The Occupation, the Philippines and Asian American Studies



Following Hagedorn's *Dream Jungle* in its attempt to "reinscribe" narratives and histories, this thesis will begin by tracing and re-examining the history of the Philippine-American relationship. The Philippine-American War at the turn of the twentieth century is in some ways a forgotten war, an invisible history, a deliberately ignored moment during which the US decided to succeed Spain as a colonial empire. Alfred W. McCoy utilizes that forgotten history in his critique of US intervention in Iraq, drawing parallels between the two conflicts in terms of their casualties and damage, as well as the strategies and rhetorical devices employed by the US government. In *Dominion from Sea to Sea*, Bruce Cumings forcefully argues for a "Pacifist" narrative that situates the US in relation towards the Pacific Ocean and the East Asian polities, in contrast to the traditional "Atlanticist" reading that emphasizes America's connection with Europe via the Atlantic Ocean. Following his scrupulous analysis of how the California frontier was "settled," Cumings sees American involvement in the Pacific as a continuation of "Manifest Destiny" and a clear indication of imperial tendencies. "It *was* empire," asserts Cumings, "and it all happened in the Pacific" (391). Dylan Rodríguez goes further, denouncing the US as a white supremacist regime which has been connected with genocide from its inception. For him, the Filipino-American subject is precluded and impossible from the beginning due to the irreconcilability of the genocidal actions that took place in the occupation of the Philippines. "Headhunter Itineraries: The Philippines as America's *Dream Jungle*," an essay by Vernadette Vicuña Gonzalez published in 2009, further complicates this position by pointing out connections and resemblances between the Philippines and the US South, as well as by analyzing the on-going construction of the "native" in modern ethnic tourism. The first part of Gonzalez's essay argues that




the process of conquest followed by reconstruction and assimilation that befell the Philippines has been a recurring project of the US, linking back to its procurement of not just the West but also the South. This allows Gonzalez to posit the question she quotes from Kathryn McKee and Annette Trefzer: “What becomes visible?” (qtd. in Gonzalez 147). Here I would draw attention to the way in which Gonzalez points out that a series of imperialist nation-building projects, ranging from the 1904 St Louis World Fair to the *National Geographic* coverage of the Igorot headhunters, all embody a strategy of displacing a brutal colonial nightmare with a dream of an uplifting and civilizing mission. Surprisingly, her essay does not advance further to position its discussions on the Igorot people who were manipulated and commodified by the US media during the War of 1899, in relation to the Tasaday people who underwent a strikingly similar process during the Vietnam War by the same propaganda machine. This is a move that I will not hesitate to put forth in this thesis in order to ask: “what becomes visible” through these connections and repetitions?

The US government, as well as a number of its scholars, prefers to narrate the turbulent history between these two countries through the language of a benevolent America that offered the Philippines education and civilization through a sort of “colonial tutelage” (Karnow 3). As pointed out by Alfred W. McCoy, this type of rhetoric would be re-articulated in 2003 by President George W. Bush during his attempt to secure the Philippines’ support for what was then the upcoming invasion of Iraq (3).⁶ These repeated inscriptions of colonial discourse and strategies set the stage for Hagedorn’s *Dream Jungle* and my reading of that text.

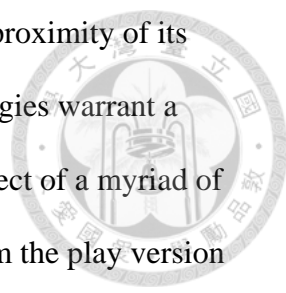
In his essay “Filipinos in the United States and Their Literature of Exile,” Oscar

⁶ In a press conference aboard Air Force One en route to Manila, President Bush declared that “America is proud of its part in the great story of the Filipino people. Together our soldiers liberated the Philippines from colonial rule,” and that doubts about the US good will “were proven wrong nearly six decades ago, when the Republic of the Philippines became the first democratic nation in Asia” (qtd. in McCoy 3).



V. Campomanes bases his critique on a sense of invisibility that plagues the Filipino American community by pointing out that Japanese Americans and Chinese Americans have situated Asian American literature around a “telos of immigration and settlement” (72), a narrative that is paradigmatically different from the Philippine experience which, he argues, is based upon the imagination of exile. Kandice Chuh in her book *Imagine Otherwise: On Asian Americanist Critique* (2003) strikes a similar note, highlighting the tensions between the category of Asian American and the category of Filipino/Filipina Americans. One commonality that can be discerned from both positions, however, is the urgency to expose US intervention and base-building as a form of imperialism. As Victor Bascara points out in *Model-Minority Imperialism* (2006), American culture is resistant toward the idea of itself as an empire, and it is this denial that restrains the association of postcolonialism with Asian American studies, because committing to such a move would imply viewing America as an imperial power. Bascara argues that the rhetoric of American liberation and its trumpeting of multiculturalism and globalization have become “the very vehicle for the new imperialism” (xvi). For him, works such as Hagedorn’s novel *Dogeaters* are able to portray the convergence of the Filipino subject with the American empire, and the “unburdening” of that empire which unfolds from such an encounter (xi). Jodi Kim, in her book *Ends of Empire* (2010), also wishes to contest mainstream liberal multiculturalism, a project she undertakes by developing an Asian American critique from a Cold War perspective. For her, the Cold War itself is an epistemology which is informed by American exceptionalism and a Manichaeian logic, and it is Asian American critique that can serve as an unsettling hermeneutic to challenge that narrative.

Hagedorn’s previous breakthrough work, the critically acclaimed novel



Dog eaters (1990), also deals with the Marcos-era Philippines. The proximity of its setting with *Dream Jungle* coupled with its different narrative strategies warrant a brief critical discussion. Academically, *Dog eaters* has been the subject of a myriad of studies. Bascara, for example, draws the inspiration of his book from the play version of *Dog eaters* and its depiction of conflict between the Filipino characters and American imperialism. In contrast, Victor Mendoza's "A Queer Nomadology of Jessica Hagedorn's *Dog eaters*" and Stephen Hong Sohn's "From Discos to Jungles: Circuitous Queer Patronage and Sex Tourism in Jessica Hagedorn's *Dog eaters*," read the text through a queer trajectory, studying the topics of sex tourism and gendered labor, both of which are also recurring themes in *Dream Jungle*. In my reading, however, I will not deploy a comparative strategy of reading *Dog eaters* and *Dream Jungle*; my goal instead is to put forward a focused analysis of the latter text, as well as the complex chain of intertexts embedded within it.

***Dream Jungle* Criticism**

Hagedorn's novel *Dream Jungle* (2003) has garnered a moderate academic following here in Taiwan, as evidenced by a number of recent scholarly works that I will discuss below. "'At Home in the World': Transnationalism and the Question of Belonging in Jessica Hagedorn's *Dream Jungle*" by Shyh-jen Fuh was published in the *Tamkang Review* in 2010, while 2012 saw Hsiu-chuan Lee's "The Remains of Empire and the 'Purloined' Philippines: Jessica Hagedorn's *Dream Jungle*" and Shu-ching Chen's "Run through the Jungle: Uncanny Domesticity and the Woman of Shame in Jessica Hagedorn's *Dream Jungle*" appear in *Mosaic* and *Tamkang Review* respectively.

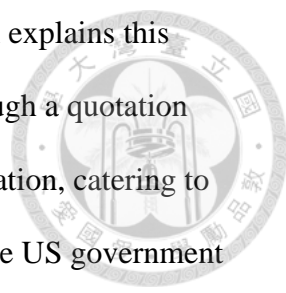
Shyh-jen Fuh argues in her essay that Hagedorn's text resists nationalist

traditions and assumptions, opting for a transnationalist and postmodernist approach. For Fuh, the cast of characters and their varying backgrounds in *Dream Jungle* position the text and the Philippines itself as transnational, as part of the world. Moreover, in her discussion of the figure of Pepito, Fuh establishes a link between this local director in the novel with Hagedorn herself, pointing out that they both navigate and appropriate pop culture and Hollywood materials, playfully meshing and claiming these materials as their own. However, Fuh also draws our attention to the limits of such a gesture, highlighting the risk of homogenization and assimilation into the hegemonic metropole. Her essay offers a helpful analysis on the form and modes of representation in the novel, but most relevant is its assessment of the novel's strategies: "Hagedorn's re-inscription of the past and current colonial aggression inflicted on the archipelago is limited to the level of invocation" (28). This is one claim that I would like to contest in this thesis project, because in my own reading and interpretation, the histories and temporalities juxtaposed within the novel are far from a simple backdrop.

Hsiu-chuan Lee, in contrast, puts forward a psychoanalytic reading that draws upon Jacques Lacan's notion of "purloining," arguing that its implied imageries of thievery, usurpation and misplacement are evoked throughout Hagedorn's text, revealing alternative strategies of resistance. Echoing Fuh's paper, Lee sees Hagedorn's novel as a distancing from the nationalist, realist position. Instead of Fuh's postmodern reading, Lee invokes Neferti X. M. Tadiar and her faith in literature's "non-realistic experimental power" (50), arguing that Hagedorn's embedding and rewriting of historical events function as examples of Tadiar's conception of how literature can encounter and engage with the political questions of the Philippines. Drawing upon Jean-Paul Dumont's observations, Lee accurately

points to how the Tasaday incident overlaps temporally with not simply the declaration of Martial Law and the de-facto dictatorship of the Marcos government, but also the Vietnam War. As fictionalized in Hagedorn's text, the media machine that covered the war is also the same machine that propagated the purported innocence and peacefulness of the noble Tasaday. As soon as the Vietnam War ended, the Tasaday fever also curiously faded out. Lee reads this "coincidence" as a contrasting and displacing strategy on the part of the media. Moving into the psychoanalytic wordplay of "purloin" as misplaced and prolonging, Lee argues that Hagedorn is able to "purloin" the Philippines by placing it within a new context for re-examination: no longer a linear conception of colonial into post-colonial, but a crisscrossing and branching out of different boundaries and subjectivities. Using different discourses to examine Hagedorn's text, Lee and Fuh come to a similar conclusion regarding multiplicity and potential resistance. However, Lee appears more optimistic about the subversive power of the "purloining" act, whereas Fuh remains vigilant and wary of the risks of assimilation within such an appropriating gesture.

Shu-ching Chen's essay on *Dream Jungle* delivers a two-pronged gendered reading that follows male characters who attempt unsuccessfully to reestablish nationhood through "domesticity," along with females who embody the Philippines as sexualized objects and sources of labor. Chen draws upon Amy Kaplan's concept of "Manifest Domesticity," combining three definitions of the domestic: a civilized space as opposed to the untamed jungle; a private sphere of home governed by females; and a space of nationhood that contrasts with the West and the global. According to Chen, this complex process of domestication is utilized by characters like Zamora and Mayor Fritz who seek in vain to recuperate nationhood through doomed projects like the Taobo Discovery, as well as their respective controlling



obsessions towards Lina, the novel's main female protagonist. Chen explains this uncanny connection between the Filipina and the island nation through a quotation from Neferti X. M. Tadiar: "the Philippines functions as a hostess nation, catering to the demands and desires of her clients—multinational capital and the US government and military" (qtd. in Chen 15). In other words, Chen reads the sexualization and prostitution of Lina as a testament and commentary on the perilous state of the country, particularly in regards to its relationship with the US. However, Chen argues that Lina is able to break out of this allotted "domestic" role through a reawakening of her subject of shame, signaled by the tiger from which she formed her final decision to leave the Philippines. In Chen's reading, then, shame acts as a productive and constructive catalyst, enabling Lina to renew her self-reflexivity and agency.

It must be acknowledged that Chen's essay offers a thorough reading of *Dream Jungle*; for example, she points out the ambiguously reciprocal relationship between Lina and Zamora, one that is described in many publications as an exclusively one-sided affair with a sexual predatory nature (19).⁷ Like Lee and Fuh, Chen also draws attention to the ironies foregrounded in Hagedorn's text that help to reveal the permeating forms of US imperialism. However, my reading in this thesis will differ from Chen's analysis on several important points, such as the role of Zamora in relation to Philippine nationhood, the details of which will be explained in Chapter Two.

In 2012 and 2013, Chen supervised two MA theses focused on Hagedorn's text: Wan-ya Chang's "Imperialism and Gender in Jessica Tarahata Hagedorn's *Dream Jungle*" and Caroline Wan-Yin Tsai's "Imperialism, Globalization and the Other in Jessica Tarahata Hagedorn's *Dream Jungle*." Chang's thesis attempts to track the

⁷ For examples that follow this reading, see the *Publishers Weekly* review on *Dream Jungle*; Fuh 28; and Ramzy 1.

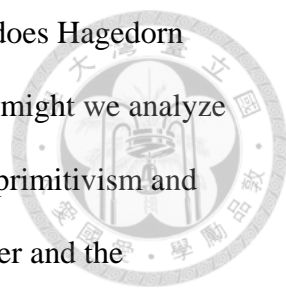
traces of imperialism and offers observations on the role of Filipinas doubly oppressed by the Western exploitation from without and the masculinist nationalism from within. Tsai, on the other hand, reads the novel from a global point of view, affirming Vernadette Gonzalez's assertion that the Philippines should be included as a part of the Global South. Their theses do not, however, seriously pursue the questions of primitivism and reinscription in Hagedorn's text, both of which will be discussed in my own reading of *Dream Jungle*.

The "Hoax" and Primitivism

In discussing *Dream Jungle*, this thesis will begin by focusing on the Tasaday/Taobo Hoax and its implications. In 1971, Philippine-based Spanish mestizo millionaire Manuel Elizalde Jr. (represented in Hagedorn's novel as the character Zamora Lopez de Legazpi) claimed to have discovered a group of peaceful, Stone Age people untouched by civilization and modernization. Jean-Paul Dumont, Hsiu-chuan Lee and Vernadette Vicuña Gonzalez all astutely observe that the event coincides temporally with the Vietnam War, which offered the opportune circumstance of a US public and media eager for relief from grimness and turmoil. The imagination of the Tasaday as pure and innocent became widely circulated through magazines such as *National Geographic*, along with visits from popular figures such as Charles A. Lindbergh and Gina Lollobrigida. With the end of the Vietnam War in 1975, interest in the Tasaday waned, while the restrictions Elizalde placed upon visitors and researchers soon invited suspicion. After the death of Ferdinand Marcos, the whole incident was decried as a hoax in 1986.⁸

My analysis in this section will be laid out through a series of questions. What is

⁸ For further details, see Jean-Paul Dumont's *The Tasaday, Which and Whose? Toward the Political Economy of an Ethnographic Sign* (1988); and Robin Hemley's *Invented Eden: The Elusive, Disputed History of the Tasaday* (2003).



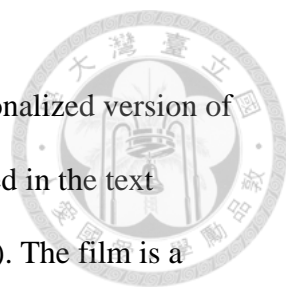
the significance of this supposed hoax of the “fake” tribe, and why does Hagedorn choose to provide an ambiguous portrayal of the controversy? How might we analyze this incident in relation to more recent theorizations on the issue of primitivism and neo-primitivism? How does the novel portray the themes of the Other and the primitive? How do the two categories differ and overlap with each other? Why, despite the problematic implications, has the link between the primitive and the Other been preserved in academia? How are these concepts significant for the disciplines of postcolonial studies and Asian American studies, and what problems and potential insights can they bring? In order to respond to these questions, I will turn to sources ranging from John Nance’s *The Gentle Tasaday: A Stone Age People in the Philippine Rain Forest* (1975); Robin Hemley’s *Invented Eden: The Elusive, Disputed History of the Tasaday* (2006); to Jessica Hagedorn’s own personal search and contact with the supposedly “fake” peoples of the Tasaday documented in her 2008 interview with Michael Collins.

Regarding the issue of primitivism, I will take as a starting point Victor Li’s recent work on this topic, especially drawing upon his book *The Neo-Primitivist Turn: Critical Reflections on Alterity, Culture, and Modernity* (2006) and his essay “Primitivism and Postcolonial Literature” (2011). Li points out a recurring tendency in the colonial West to describe a primitive that is ignorant, culturally backwards and intellectually inferior. These scathing views of the primitive eventually gave way, in Li’s account, to forms of glorification and idealization, which stem from disenchantment in modernity. People began to turn to the primitive as an Other that resists the ails of modernization, an alternative to the monotonous sameness that suffocates modern life. However, this trend was also short-lived, as later theorists criticized these problematic notions steeped in misconceptions and Eurocentrism. It is

toward these last groups of anti-Primitivists that Li directs his critique, in which he contends that even as they caution against and attempt to dispel the illusion of the primitive, there is still a continued reliance on the very concept they aim to displace. In order to reveal the dilemma when dealing theoretically with the notion of the primitive Other in theory, Li names scholars from Habermas to Levinas, Lyotard to Spivak, and finally even himself, as practitioners caught in this primitivist trap. Li's theorizations will help inform my interpretations of *Dream Jungle*, as the novel's depictions of the Tasaday story are very much indicative of the very issues that Li has laid out.

Tracing a continuous imagination of the colonies as child-like and innocent in US history, Debra T. Werrlein argues in a 2004 paper that these images culminated in Manifest Destiny and Philippine-American War propaganda. The aforementioned essays by Gonzalez and Werrlein are different projects, but they can be viewed as intersecting by way of their conceptualizations of the primitive. Gonzalez, for example, lists the pristine "native" imagining that becomes an obsession for the metropole, culminating in the ethnic tourism that she critiques. This "nativeness" is a long-standing feature in primitivist narratives, and its allure is part of the reason why primitivist assumptions are so difficult to shake. Werrlein's essay similarly touches upon another aspect that has been attributed to the primitive, namely purported innocence and childlike qualities. Through the use of clever rhetoric and language, Americans inscribed the Philippines as an infant protectorate and Filipinos a backward people who could not rule themselves. These maneuvers demonstrate one of the worst offenses that could stem from primitivist assumptions, but by examining them, there is also the possibility to reveal the contours of imperialism embedded within the American "mission" in the Philippines.

Reinscriptions



The second half of Hagedorn's *Dream Jungle* recounts a fictionalized version of the *Apocalypse Now* film shoot of Francis Ford Coppola (represented in the text through a film named *Napalm Sunset* and the character Tony Pierce). The film is a re-imagining of Joseph Conrad's novel *Heart of Darkness*, as well as a commentary on the watershed of the Vietnam War. Three female characters in Hagedorn's novel, however, undercut the grandiose promise of this epic project: Janet Pierce (representing Eleanor Coppola), Rizalina/Lina, and Paz Marlow. All three characters apprehend the excesses of the film production in their own distinct ways, Janet through her documentary, Paz through her status as a reporter, and Lina as herself. What they observe is a display of exploitation, extravagance, and a deep-seated complicity with the nationalistic regime as well as the pervasive imperialism of US influence. As the shooting dragged on in delays, budget overruns, confusion and chaos, both directors—fictional and real—begin to revel in the advantages of the imperial structure they supposedly set out to critique. Most significantly, Hagedorn's portrayal of this notorious film production makes visible a line of associations that can be read as interconnected acts of reinscriptions.

Indeed, there are several complex and interconnected forms of reinscription happening in Hagedorn's project, starting from Joseph Conrad's rendition of the Congo in *Heart of Darkness* (1899), to Francis Coppola's reinscription of Conrad and the Vietnam War in *Apocalypse Now* (1979), to Hagedorn's embedding of colonial history and Coppola's bout in the Philippines in *Dream Jungle* (2003). Working through and making sense of this long string of reinscriptions will be the focus of this section of my thesis.

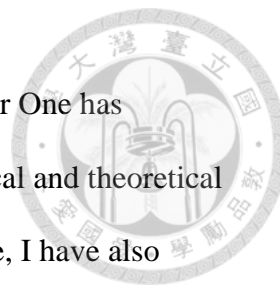
Thesis Outline

The structure of my thesis will consist of four chapters. Chapter One has introduced my thesis project by laying out the historical, geographical and theoretical frameworks within which my thesis will position itself. Furthermore, I have also reviewed key texts in Asian American studies as well as critical essays and existing MA thesis projects that have discussed Hagedorn's *Dream Jungle*.

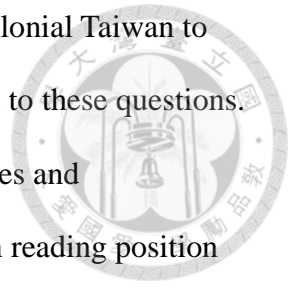
Chapter Two will address the first main events represented in Hagedorn's novel: the Tasaday/Taobo incident, regarding the fake stone-age tribe's interaction with the character Zamora, paralleled with the colonial materials recording Ferdinand Magellan's expedition and death in the Philippines in 1521. Building upon the Taobo's supposedly fake primitivism, I will draw upon and mobilize what Victor Li calls the notion of neo-primitivism: a prevalent characteristic in academia to disavow modernist perceptions of primitivism, then fall back upon the same presumptions that have supposedly been denounced.

Chapter Three will begin with a tracing of the term "reinscription" and how it has been critically mobilized. This chapter will then turn its attention towards the complex lines of association that can be traced from Joseph Conrad's novel *Heart of Darkness* to *Dream Jungle*, with a look at the intertexts embedded in-between, including the film *Apocalypse Now*, the documentary *Hearts of Darkness: A Filmmaker's Apocalypse*, and the book *Notes on the Making of Apocalypse Now* by Eleanor Coppola. In this chapter, I will take into account different modes and usages of reinscription in order to attempt to develop a reading strategy to make sense of Hagedorn's text.

Chapter Four will critically re-examine the significance of this thesis project as a whole. This chapter will bring up possible questions for further investigation, and



engage in a self-reflexive account of my own positionality in postcolonial Taiwan to ask how this positioning would or could affect my critical approach to these questions. This project is not a comparative study of the postcolonial Philippines and postcolonial Taiwan, but it will attempt to take into account my own reading position and institutional location. In doing so, I will contemplate how my thesis could contribute towards on-going scholarly concerns, particularly in relation to Chih-ming Wang's recent critical reevaluations of Asian American studies in Taiwan and elsewhere in Asia.⁹



⁹ See Wang's "Thinking and Feeling Asian America in Taiwan" in *American Quarterly* (2007); "Editorial Introduction: Between Nations and Across the Ocean" in *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies* (2012); and *Transpacific Articulations* (2013).

Chapter Two



The “Discovery”

In 2001, Jessica Hagedorn traveled back to the Philippines to conduct research for her novel *Dream Jungle*. Within the recesses of the Mindanao rain forest, she was able to interview a group of natives after she offered to treat them to lunch (she bought whatever food they wanted at the market and they cooked it up for the whole village). The highlight of the encounter, revealed by Hagedorn in a 2008 interview with Michael Collins, is a single quotation from the natives: “They say we are not real” (12). This group of people, fictionalized in *Dream Jungle* as the Taobo, is known in real life as the Tasaday—the lost tribe; the gentle Tasaday; the stone age primitives who wore leaves and had no concept or words for war. Or at least, these were the attributes inscribed upon them during their initial 1971 “discovery,” which sprung from another meeting that took place between the same group and a different person: Manuel “Manda” Elizalde, Jr., a Harvard-educated playboy-turned-philanthropist.

That particular encounter between the Tasaday and Elizalde was significant for its colonial and anachronistic implications, but it was far from a “discovery” per se, even within colonial semantics. It was a local hunter named Dafal who actually stumbled across these mysterious people in the forest; he then informed Elizalde of their existence and negotiated the meeting.¹⁰ Afterwards, on June 4th, 1971, Elizalde made his entrance into the jungle from his personal helicopter—the words “Tao Bong” painted on its sides—with his bodyguard, interpreter, and other local associates in tow. This kind of gesture was in fact somewhat of a routine for Elizalde, the oldest son of a Filipino-based millionaire of Spanish descent. Before the Tasaday, Elizalde

¹⁰ An account of Dafal’s initial encounter with the Tasaday can be found in John Nance’s book *The Gentle Tasaday*; see Nance 4.

had already been descending regularly onto different tribes all around the Philippines to distribute food, medical aid, and supplies, which led to his establishment of the PANAMIN (Private Association for National Minorities) and appointment into the cabinet as an advisor on minority issues by President Ferdinand Marcos in 1968. Eventually Elizalde became known as the benevolent Tao Bong—big man, big brother—by the local populace. It was perhaps with that paternalistic mindset that Elizalde reportedly asked, on their initial meeting, what the Tasaday wanted and needed. Their famous reply was: “Nothing” (qtd. in Nance 13).

The exact details of what transpired during that encounter is still an item of debate, due to the later controversy surrounding the tribe. A few days after their first encounter, Elizalde was already flying back with a *National Geographic* crew who happened to be in the area for a documentary on local tribes and the PANAMIN. On July 8th, 1971, the Tasaday were first mentioned to the public in local newspaper *Daily Mirror* as a “lost tribe.”¹¹ *National Geographic* rushed out an issue for December 1971 named “First Glimpses of a Stone Age Tribe”; another more elaborate issue “Stone Age Cavemen of Mindanao” was published the following year, along with a documentary film *The Last Tribes of Mindanao*. Other media outlets swiftly followed, including *Reader’s Digest* and the National Broadcasting Company (NBC). John Nance, one of the first journalists on the scene, wrote a book *The Gentle Tasaday: A Stone Age People in the Philippine Rain Forest* (1975) that became a bestseller. In these narratives, the tribe was inscribed as timid and innocent, equipped with no knowledge of war or agriculture; living off the forest flora; and having only access to stone tools. Their isolation allowed Elizalde and the media to publicize them as primordial humans, unsoiled by the ills of modernity. This image of the peaceful,

¹¹ Nance, being an Associated Press chief at that juncture, was able to record the process of Tasaday’s initial media coverage in his book (28).

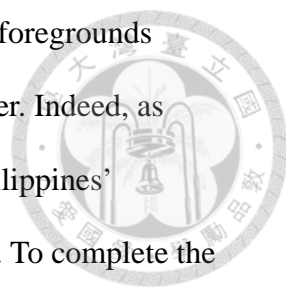
idyllic and utopian Tasaday struck a chord with a US public reeling from the Vietnam War. According to Hemley, “Tasaday became, for a time, worldwide celebrities. Lobo graced the cover of *National Geographic* in one of the magazine’s best-selling issues in its history” (7). With Elizalde in the lead, scores of anthropologists, reporters, and even celebrities like Charles Lindburgh and Gina Lollobrigida flocked to the jungle in order to witness, document, and study these people.¹²

Hagedorn re-enacted the events of this first glimpse of the Tasaday in *Dream Jungle*, but she does not begin her novel with Elizalde’s arrival in the jungle. Instead, she excavates and foregrounds a piece of the Philippines’ colonial past: a document by Antonio Pigafetta detailing the 1521 expedition of Ferdinand Magellan and his first encounter with the natives:

Each one of those people lives according to his own will, for they have no seignor. They go naked, and some are bearded and have black hair that reaches to the waist The women go naked except that they wear a narrow strip of bark as thin as paper, which grows between the tree and the bark of the palm They use no weapons, except a kind of spear pointed with a fishbone at the end. Those people are poor, but ingenious and very thievish, on account of which we call those three islands the islands of Ladroni (i.e., of thieves) Those Ladroni thought, according to the signs which they made, that there were no other people in the world but themselves. (3)

The colonial materials drawn from Pigafetta not only take up the first pages of Hagedorn’s novel; they are also dispersed and juxtaposed throughout the first half of the book, which is fittingly named “Discovery and Conquest.” This narrative

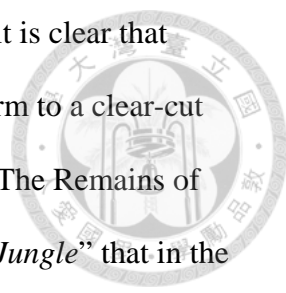
¹² For a critical account of this introduction of celebrity icons into the jungle, see Hemley 7.



maneuver encourages readers to recognize a parallel that Hagedorn foregrounds between the 1521 colonial encounter and the 1971 Tasaday encounter. Indeed, as Robin Hemley points out, Elizalde is “the product of both of the Philippines’ colonizers”—his mother was American, and his father Spanish (10). To complete the colonial link, Hagedorn’s fictionalized version of Elizalde is called Zamora López de Legazpi, cheekily named after the governor of the first Spanish settlement on the Philippines, Miguel López de Legazpi (1502-1572).¹³ In chapters such as “The Conquistador’s Lament,” the character Zamora is further inscribed as a swashbuckling Spaniard, whose misadventures turn around to haunt him in dreams and nightmares. It becomes clear that the power relations and inner mechanics within the two “discoveries” by Magellan and Elizalde/Zamora are, despite their vast historical separation, strikingly similar, from the “discoverer” dominating the power of representation, down to the assumptions and idealizations imposed upon the “discovered” peoples. By positioning the Tasaday encounter within such a framework, Hagedorn locates the purportedly humanitarian efforts of Elizalde in a long genealogy of colonial discourse, exploitation, and inscription.

What unsettles such a straightforward anti-colonial reading, however, is that Elizalde—and by extension the fictional Zamora as he is represented in Hagedorn’s novel—is Filipino himself. Despite the descent of his parents, Elizalde was born in the Philippines, and after returning from Harvard, he stayed in the island nation for most of his life. Indeed, a 2012 paper “Run through the Jungle: Uncanny Domesticity and the Woman of Shame in Jessica Hagedorn’s *Dream Jungle*” by Shu-ching Chen (discussed earlier in Chapter One) reads the Zamora character as a Filipino nationalist who wishes to “search for the ‘origin’ of the nation through an anthropological

¹³ This allusion was noted during a 2003 National Public Radio (NPR) News interview between Jessica Hagedorn and Liane Hansen.



expedition” (7). Although I do not fully endorse this interpretation, it is clear that Elizalde/Zamora occupy an ambiguous position that does not conform to a clear-cut colonizer-colonized paradigm.¹⁴ Hsiu-chuan Lee also observes in “The Remains of Empire and the ‘Purloined’ Philippines: Jessica Hagedorn’s *Dream Jungle*” that in the novel, Zamora’s entry into the jungle marks a subtle change in his initial status as a colonizer and conquistador: “[s]tripped of his imperialist ostentation and extravagance, Zamora is an individual The power relation between the imperial and the local is reversed . . . his body dislocated, incorporated by the Philippine landscape” (60). However, it can be argued that Hagedorn has utilized her poetic license in her rendition of the historical Elizalde’s contact with the jungle. Elizalde, unlike his fictional version, certainly did not meet the Tasaday as “a conquistador without an army, a rich man without his usual posse” (*Dream Jungle* 6). Furthermore, even the nuanced reversal of power enacted in the novel proves to be temporary and short-lived, as later portrayals expose Zamora’s comfortable regression back into his luxurious manor and womanizing ways, following his return from the jungle.

Historically, the initial excitement of the Tasaday “discovery” in the early 1970s did not last long. The scientists that were allowed to stay and study the group complained about restrictions and interventions from the PANAMIN staff; they were forbidden to sleep in the Tasadays’ caves; and, as they discovered to their dismay, the PANAMIN were passing along rice to the Tasaday, skewing the data on the tribe’s dietary methods.¹⁵ Other researchers blamed the inability of PANAMIN to supply them with adequate supplies and medicine. Hemley’s account details the scientists leaving the jungle for one reason or another, unable to conduct sustained research or

¹⁴ Chen’s reading places Zamora’s trajectory alongside nationalist rhetoric that is generally found in the characters of Fritz and the President—a reference to Ferdinand Marcos—but less so in Zamora. The nationalist project of origin-seeking will be discussed later in this chapter.


¹⁵ An account of this rice controversy can be found in Nance 257; and Hemley 65.

reach any conclusive results on the Tasaday (84). Even Elizalde began to visit the Tasaday less and less, being preoccupied with a senatorial election in which he was nominated two months after the initial “discovery.” With critics voicing concern over the Tasaday being exploited and exposed to detrimental influences, Marcos finally signed Presidential Decree 1017 in 1976, forbidding all unauthorized entry into the Tasaday area. Nobody received authorization for the next ten years, and the Tasaday were “lost” to the world once more.¹⁶

Although only referenced indirectly in Hagedorn’s novel, there is one more crucial encounter that brought the Tasaday back into the spotlight, this time inscribing them with long-lasting infamy. In 1986, a civil war was raging in Mindanao, Elizalde had fled the country, the Marcos government was overthrown, and its ban on visits to the Tasaday was no longer enforced enthusiastically. A Swiss reporter, Oswald Iten, along with his local guide and translator Joey Lozano, traveled to the Tasaday mountains wishing to interview the tribe that had been locked away from the world for a decade. What he found was more than he had bargained for. Reportedly, he met two of the original Tasaday wearing T-shirts and jeans, who casually informed him that the stone-age tribal image was a nothing but a sham; apparently Elizalde had bribed some local people like themselves to dress and act the part for the cameras. Iten’s scandalous report was followed by a 20/20 news report from the American Broadcasting Company (ABC), a heated conference at the University of the Philippines in August 1986, and the 1988 International Congress on Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences in Zagreb, all of which helped inscribe new attributes upon the Tasaday: phony, fake, a hoax.¹⁷

¹⁶ For a detailed history of this decline of the Tasaday story from the public eye and as a topic of research, see Hemley 66-85. Notably, 1976 also marks the year that *Apocalypse Now* started shooting in the Philippines.

¹⁷ This whistleblowing process of the Tasaday is discussed in Hemley 8.



The claims of these hoax advocates were not, however, unchallenged. Following the removal of the Marcos government, Manuel Elizalde returned to the country and defended himself and the tribe against the accusations. According to Hemley, Elizalde addressed the Filipino Congress in defense of the Tasaday in 1987, and the following year saw him bringing members of Tasaday to Manila in order to file a libel lawsuit against the detractors (173). With Elizalde's return, the Tasaday recanted their testimony on the hoax; apparently they were unsuspectingly coached and coaxed through the promise of food and supplies, made by none other than Joey Lozano, the guide and interpreter who accompanied the original whistleblower Oswald Iten.¹⁸ The defense from the hoax suspects might seem to carry less weight due to their vested interests, but other voices began to vindicate the Tasaday as well. Lawrence Reid, a leading specialist on Austronesian dialects in the region, studied the language of the Tasaday for six months and concluded that it is neither fake nor made up. According to Reid, their language contains connections with a distant tribe the Cotabato Manobo, which contradicts the popular hoax theory that the Tasaday were simply recruited from the neighboring T'boli or Blit villages. Although the Tasaday may not have been isolated for thousands of years as the initial reports had claimed, Reid argues that they were probably separated from the Manobo group for as long as 150 years.

More recently, the book *Invented Eden: The Elusive, Disputed History of the Tasaday* (2003) by Robin Hemley also casts doubts upon the hoax claims. Although Hemley does not shy away from critiquing Elizalde's methods and is deeply skeptical of the original idealized representation of the Tasaday, he is just as suspicious of the accusation that the Tasaday were a complete fabrication. Armed with years of research

¹⁸ For a comprehensive account of Joey Lozano and his alleged deceptions that generated the story of the Tasaday hoax, see Hemley 300.

in the materials from both sides of the controversy and his own encounters with the surviving Tasaday, Hemley asserts that much of the accusations and even evidence of the hoax had originated from anti-Marcos sentiments and lowlander interests to see the rich areas around the Tasaday mountains stripped of their legal protection (299-305). He also observes that the pro-Tasaday camp have long since admitted the widely circulated images of the tribe insinuated in the initial media representations were exaggerated and highly idealized; they now only assert that the Tasaday exist as an individual tribe. In contrast, the hoax proponents still cling to the sensationalist story that the Tasaday were only regular locals recruited from nearby villages by Elizalde to act like cavemen, despite evidence to the contrary.

When examining the Tasaday incident from this trajectory of hoax and authenticity, one realizes that not only does it carry resemblance to colonial discoveries; it also shares some traits with postcolonial symptoms. As pointed out by Carrie Dawson, “fake” informants of native cultures are in fact something of an established tradition in the postcolonial field. Dawson puts forth the case of Australian literature, which has seen a long line of white writers or artists posing as aborigines, operating with aboriginal names, addressing aboriginal issues, imitating aboriginal art and style. During the colonial period, what happened was often the opposite, where a “white” name was preferred for a publication and sometimes native writers had to adopt pseudonyms or were coerced into publishing under someone else’ name, such as the case of David Unaipon.¹⁹ Although the two modes seem to be reversed, on closer examination they turn out to be functionally similar, both ending with the appropriation of aborigine identities and assets. Each time a hoaxer is exposed, such as the more recent cases of Norma Khouri or Helen Demidenko, the controversy

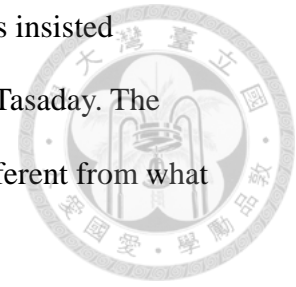
¹⁹ Unaipon is a Ngarrindjeri writer whose face appears on the Australian fifty dollar bill. His collection of native stories was published in 1930 under the name of William Ramsay-Smith, a White man.

sparks off a flurry of discussions about origins, identities, and authenticity. However, as Dawson suggests in a special 2004 issue of *Australian Literary Studies* “Who’s Who?: Hoaxes, Imposture and Identity Crises in Australian Literature,” it might be worthwhile to postpone the question of authenticity when reading these instances of hoaxes and instead examine how identity is formed and assumed in these narratives. In the case of my discussion of the Taobo/Tasaday in the context of this thesis, the stakes are not so much about identity but about representation and discourse.

In this sense, the purpose of this thesis is not to determine the validity of either side of the Tasaday controversy. Indeed, as later researchers such as Hemley began to dig deeper into the nuances of the incident, it becomes evident that the Tasaday story cannot be hand-waved into a stable binary of truth versus hoax, or stone-age cavemen versus dressed-up actors. There were numerous conflicting factors at work: the Tasadays’ motives, their assumed honesty, their inevitable acculturation through the decades since their “discovery,” in counterpoint to Elizalde’s motives, his romantic idealizations, his enforced primitivism and opportunism. When compounded further with the motives and methods of every person who had their own encounters with the Tasaday, who tried their own hand at inscribing this story, the result is an unresolved and perhaps unresolvable controversy.

The point that this thesis will bring up is this: instead of framing the Tasaday incident within the confines of truth or hoax extremes, a better question to ask would be why there was this obsession in the first place? What drove such an obsession, even decades after 1971? Why are the encounters with the Tasaday—from Elizalde to the later researchers and perhaps even Hagedorn—largely predicated on this contested sense of authentic primitivism? Finally, what can the Tasaday incident reveal to us, in terms of media representation, its popular consumption, and the power structures that

prop up this circuit of representation and reception? John Nance has insisted throughout the years that there is something we can learn from the Tasaday. The lessons that this thesis will investigate, however, might be quite different from what Nance originally had in mind.



Representations

As the Tasaday neither read nor write, their representation has been dominated by outside sources including Elizalde, Nance, Iten, Hemley, and Hagedorn. Moreover, the Tasaday cannot “speak,” in the sense that their perspectives have been mediated through interpreters who also have difficulty understanding their language, or may have ulterior motives to manipulate and mistranslate, as Hemley argues in the case of Joey Lozano. I would push further to contend that the Tasaday have been in this restricted sense powerless to “act,” not simply in terms of their lack of self-determination, but also because their recorded actions were already influenced and conditioned from the 1971 encounter, when Elizalde arrived in his helicopter. Both sides of the controversy agree that the iconic photos of “cavemen” and vine-climbing activities taken by *National Geographic* were heavily influenced by Elizalde, the camera crew, and the Tasaday’s awareness of what sorts of display were expected of them. For instance, during their brief stay, the NBC documentary crew persuaded a member of the Tasaday community to introduce other members of the tribe to the camera. Hemley observes that the Tasaday man “was at this point, if not a paid actor, an actor nonetheless” (364).²⁰ In other words, whether in face-to-face encounters or in documentary frames, the images of Tasaday were always already refracted and distorted through multiple layers of narrative and discourse. The

²⁰ This incident between the Tasaday and the NBC crew is also discussed in Nance 364.

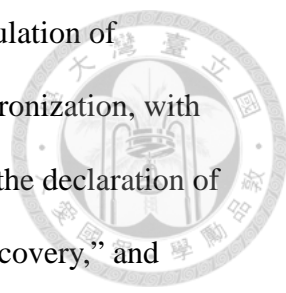
precariousness of these inscriptions explains the impossibility of grasping any sort of truth or resolution from the incident, but also highlights the crucial role that the media—literally the middle-man in the encounters with the Tasaday—has played in the shaping of the Tasaday “myth.”



The initial report about the Tasaday “discovery” was met with a lukewarm response. Even John Nance, then an Associated Press bureau chief and skeptical about the story, was curious about the lack of coverage for this supposedly great discovery (28-29). What propelled the Tasaday story to global attention was the follow up from major media outlets: *National Geographic*, *Reader’s Digest*, NBC. The first academic paper on the Tasaday by Elizalde and Fox was itself already steeped in wishful assumptions and publicity-aware shrewdness when it hints at the potential of the Tasaday, what the group could reveal about early humans, and how the PANAMIN defends minorities such as the Tasaday from encroaching loggers and lowlander development.²¹ The media giants then followed suit, armed with their own vested interests and shadowed by their audience’s expectations, latching on to the rhetoric of authenticity, innocence, and stone-age cavemen. In his 2006 re-assessment, Hemley points out that “the [Tasaday] case was tried in the court of the media” (311). As an extension to that statement, I would argue that the “Tasaday” as we know them was a media construct from its very conception. It only makes sense that the “myth” surrounding the group was validated and later denounced in the same arena of mass media, despite the efforts of academics and scientists.

A further complication regarding the Tasaday’s turbulent entanglement with the media was raised by Jean-Paul Dumont in his essay “The Tasaday, Which and Whose? Toward the Political Economy of an Ethnographic Sign” (1988). For Dumont, the

²¹ The contents of this essay are quoted and discussed in Hemley 105.



peculiar thing about the Tasaday incident was not simply the manipulation of representations but rather its temporal overlap, to the point of synchronization, with two other major contemporary events. The first parallel began with the declaration of martial law by the Marcos government in 1972, a year after the “discovery,” and ended with the fall of the dictatorship in 1986, the same year that Oswald Iten “exposed” the hoax. This is a connection that has not escaped the Tasaday detractors, who have argued that the tribe was utilized (or perhaps invented) by the Marcos regime to direct attention from their de facto dictatorship. More importantly, as Dumont argues, the docile Tasaday “are in fact ideal subjects,” an excellent alternative to the restless population which was and is prone to rebellion and resistance (264). By capitalizing on the Tasaday, the Marcos regime not only gained publicity as defenders of minorities; they also put forth an ideal image of Filipinos who are so content and so peaceful that they do not even speak the language of war. This closely knitted relationship between the dictatorship and the tribe also explains why the Tasaday were seen as a hallmark of the Marcos regime’s achievements, and why they quickly became the target of anti-Marcos factions eager to debunk any and all accomplishments of the regime.

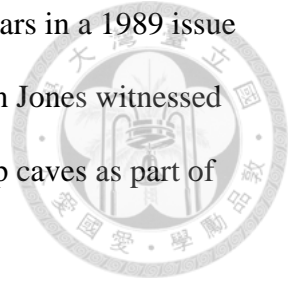
The second event that ran parallel with the Tasaday representation, according to Dumont, is the Vietnam War. A mere nine days after the infamous initial encounter between Elizalde and the Tasaday, the *New York Times* unveiled the “Pentagon Papers” in June 13, 1971, revealing the clandestine operations of the US government in Vietnam that were kept secret from the American public and Congress. Furthermore, while American reporters were filming the Tasaday in April 1972, the US military was preparing to resume the bombing of North Vietnam. And finally, John Nance’s book *The Gentle Tasaday* was published in 1975, the same year that South Vietnam was

overrun by the communist forces. In this context, the Tasaday again became a convenient antithetical replacement, this time in opposition to the Vietnamese and the Vietcong. For Dumont, the counterpoint runs deeper than simply the extremes of violent resistance and passive innocence; further parallels are drawn from the caves of the Tasaday to the notorious tunnels of the Vietcong, and the contrast in numbers: the few and vulnerable tribesmen compared to the unstoppable waves of Vietnamese. In other words, the American media seized the image of the Tasaday to provide an alternative to the vicious and bloodthirsty Vietcong, presenting an idealized version of docile little brown brothers who were in need of protection.²²

This maneuver of representational displacement was not limited to the American media, as Dumont's first parallel demonstrates. At the same time, however, the treatment of the Tasaday is reminiscent of an earlier event, as Vernadette Vicuña Gonzalez suggests in her 2009 essay "Headhunter Itineraries: The Philippines as America's *Dream Jungle*." That earlier event is the representation of the Igorot people—native to northern Luzon, known for their headhunting and dog-eating practices—through books, *National Geographic* accounts, and a direct display of them at the 1904 St Louis World Fair. Although vastly different in their initial inscription—one as violent headhunters, the other as peace-loving noble savages—the Igorot and the Tasaday were subjected to strikingly similar circulating models and discursive strategies when their portrayals were sold to the American public. Gonzalez argues that these measures, particularly at the St Louis exposition, were ways to diffuse the savagery of the Igorot by confining them within a "safely corralled, eminently photographable domestic space" (151). Gonzalez does not pursue a further comparison between the Igorot and the Tasaday, but the similarity between the

²² Dumont argues that the representation of the Tasaday was adhering to a "model of otherness" that fulfilled the American imagination (269). In many ways, this recalls the controversial "model minority" stamp that was placed upon Asian Americans.

treatments of both tribes has not gone unnoticed. One example appears in a 1989 issue of the *Christian Science World Monitor*, after correspondent Clayton Jones witnessed a cultural event in Mindanao that invited some Tasaday to sit in prop caves as part of its features:



They appeared right at home, like the bears in the San Diego Zoo, although my first stunned impression was that of wax mannequins in a museum. Was this another abominable display of tribal Filipinos, like the one at the 1904 exhibition in St. Louis . . . ? On the front of their mock grotto was a small placard proclaiming it, 'Our Home.' (qtd. in Hemley 183)

These parallels in the treatment of the two tribes reveal a recurring pattern and strategy of representation, one that repeatedly surfaces despite gaps in time, shifts in discourse, and changes in circumstance.

In her brief but pointed reading of *Dream Jungle*, Gonzalez points out a dual structure within the American colonial project in the Philippines: the “intertwined tropes of nightmare and dream” (145). The nightmare refers to the traumatic aggression and genocidal violence that is inherent to the colonial acquisition of the Philippines, and the dream stands for the fantasy of benevolence, uplift, and the civilizing mission. Transforming the bloodstained trauma of the former into the benevolent rhetoric of the latter, the colonial project manifests itself not only on a national scale but also through events like the Taobo/Tasaday portrayed in Hagedorn’s novel. Reading the Igorot in this line of inquiry, a “double inscription” is performed, where the violent nightmare of colonial usurpation is projected upon the natives, whose savagery then becomes part of the moral justification for their colonization.²³ At the same time, the “civilized” Igorot that emerged from that colonization once

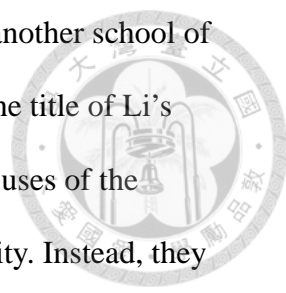
²³ This reading follows Peter Hulme’s analysis of Caliban and Prospero in *Colonial Encounters* (1986). Hulme’s reading and the notion of “double inscription” will be discussed in detail in Chapter Three.

more become proof of the success of the uplifting and domesticating mission. The Tasaday, on the other hand, appear to sit neatly in the “dream” category, as docile Ariels, models of otherness, a “model minority” of the Philippines. Despite these differences, however, a common theme ties the two tribes in their representations, an inscription that “sells” their story to the consuming public. That attribute is primitivism.

Primitivism

In his 2006 book *The Neo-Primitivist Turn: Cultural Reflections on Alterity, Culture, and Modernity*, Victor Li lays out a genealogy of primitivism and its transmutations. According to Li, the term and concept of “primitivism” originated from 19th century theories of social evolution and progress, which pit the sophistication of Western civilization against the backwardness of the non-Western Other. The invention of this category of the primitive and savage Other not only reifies the West’s belief in progress, but also legitimizes its civilizing mission.

This negative view of the primitive would be challenged and replaced in the 20th century by thinkers like Edward Sapir and Claude Levi-Strauss, who saw the primitive as an alternative, an opportunity to re-examine the negative impact of modernity. Although these two opposing theoretical positions seem irreconcilable, there are revealing similarities in their treatment of the primitive as strictly a reflection of the West, the only difference being whether that reflection is positive for the West or not. In other words, for both positions the primitive exists as a necessary invention for the West. Worse, in the latter school’s frequent adoption of the primitive, the concept has slowly lost its shock value and critical edge, and it has steadily been assimilated into Western discourse.



To respond and to critique the two aforementioned positions, another school of thought has emerged in recent years, a movement that is named in the title of Li's book. As Li demonstrates, these neo-primitivists reject the previous uses of the primitive as a dialectic opposite or an ethnocentric limit for modernity. Instead, they argue for a primitive that stands as an "absolute rupture . . . [a] radical, incommensurable alterity" that cannot be recuperated into Western modernity (17). The main departure from the earlier schools, then, is that neo-primitivists do not assume that the primitive is knowable. Indeed, they assume the primitive to be unknowable, an abstraction that cannot be grasped, incorporated, or fetishized. This radical alterity bestowed upon the primitive would supposedly re-affirm its disruptive strength and avoid the pitfalls of the predecessors.

Therein lies the irony, and the brunt of Li's argument. As much as the neo-primitivists insist on the incommensurability and caution against the exploitation by the earlier theorists, the primitive is ultimately still positioned as an Other to the West and utilized as a foil that ensures the self-critique and renewal of the Western subject. Despite their stated intentions, neo-primitivists have paradoxically reintroduced and re-inscribed the primitive, even as they try to dispel and disavow its more nefarious usages. Li's critique of these neo-primitivists takes him from postmodern theorists including Jean Baudrillard and Jean-François Lyotard to renowned scholars like Jürgen Habermas and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, all of whom make the similar step to critique primitivism only to end up—in Li's account—entangled and complicit with it.

Li's sharp line of critique takes a reconciliatory turn towards the end of his book, when he acknowledges that primitivism—and the Other that it supplies—may prove to be inevitable for all kinds of theorizing. Conflating the category of the theoretical

Other with the concept of the primitive, Li asserts that “[t]o dismiss the primitive Other is thus to dismiss theory itself, a price we may be unwilling to pay” (226). In contrast, in *The Reinvention of Primitive Society: Transformations of a Myth*, Adam Kuper argues that the romantic ideal of the primitive was a myth from its beginning, and only its usefulness in various political and theoretical agencies has allowed this illusion to return time and again. Similar to Li, Kuper points out that “primitive society is the mirror image of modern society or, rather, primitive society inverts some strategically significant features that are attributed to modern society” (223). Unlike Li, however, Kuper remains staunchly critical of the re-adoption of primitivism in recent thought such as the indigenous people’s movement, viewing it as dangerously essentialist and misguided.

The purpose of this turn to the theorizations of the primitive might hopefully become clear at this point. The story of the Tasaday, reinscribed by Hagedorn as the Taobo in *Dream Jungle*, do not simply carry the weight of primitivist imaginations and problematics. More interestingly, the tribe and its representations function as an uncanny re-staging of the workings of the primitive category that I have discussed above. Like the myth of the primitive, the myth of the Tasaday/Taobo was a construct from the very beginning, an ideal blown out of proportion. Like the myth of the primitive, the myth of the Tasaday/Taobo was kept afloat due to its potential for different kinds of political propaganda, media narrativization, or scholarly theorization. Like the myth of the primitive, the myth of the Tasaday/Taobo was disavowed and critiqued as a fabrication, a hollow ideal, a propped up displacement. And like the myth of the primitive, the myth of the Tasaday/Taobo returns and is re-inscribed time and again, even by those wishing to avoid or critique its inherent problematics, despite all efforts to debunk (or for some, defame) their existence. The

peculiar saga of the Tasaday/Taobo, then, can be read as a re-enactment or embodiment of the primitivist “dream” in action.



Jungle Dreams

True to its book title, Hagedorn’s *Dream Jungle* demonstrates a number of dreams throughout its narrative from a wide array of characters. Zamora, the fictionalized character that takes after Manuel Elizalde, recounts his first encounter with the Taobo several times throughout the novel, and each time the experience invokes dreams: “He had walked into a dream. Someone else’s dream . . . but now stolen and claimed by Zamora. The landscape of that dream—vast, ominous, shimmering blues and greens—was simply part of the loot” (5). The language of colonial conquest, along with the merging of the Mindanao landscape with the Taobo, reveals the power relations involved within this “dream.” Later, in the concluding chapter of Part One of Hagedorn’s novel, after Lina escapes from his compound, Zamora dreams again of the Taobo encounter: “How I remember it! How I remember it as if it were . . . what? Yesterday, today, tomorrow. . . . There were too many eyes watching me. Not animal or insect eyes but the human eyes of forest people” (122, first ellipses in original). Immediately after, in a delirious dream-within-a-dream, Zamora reveals some hints regarding the motivation for his actions: “In my dream Papa sat in the middle of the forest, on a stool carved of bone. . . . In my dream Papa was kind. In my dream Papa called out to me. . . . *Mi hijito! Finally, something of your own*” (124).

For Zamora, then, the Taobo people are framed within the rhetoric of dreams, only visible as apparitions for his wish-fulfillment and self-accomplishment. This perspective for viewing the Taobo/Tasaday is not exclusive to Zamora, as it is also

adopted by the media and the consuming public itself. Robin Hemley provides a telling confession of his personal sentiments when he first saw the news broadcast about the tantalizing tribe: “I wanted of course to *be* one of them, to know their happy, simple life. . . . Lawrence Welk, *Bonanza*, *Bewitched*, all offered comfortable alternative realities to lose oneself in, but none as enticing as the Tasaday” (6). The unwitting comparison between show business icons and an anthropological “discovery” sheds light on how the Taobo/Tasaday have been represented and received: as anachronistic curiosity, a fetishistic escape, a primitivist dream.

As hinted in the earlier conquest-themed quotation from Zamora, the dreams invoked by the Taobo/Tasaday are not limited to the colonial and neo-colonial variety. Indeed, Zamora makes it explicit that he was stealing someone else’s dream, one to which he now lays claim. Although not formally relevant until the second half of *Dream Jungle*, the character of Fritz Magbantay provides this line of analysis a glimpse into a similar, but subtly different, kind of dream.

Fritz is introduced early on in a quick cameo chapter as a presidential aid, witnessing the meeting that cemented collaboration between Zamora and the President regarding the Taobo. In contrast to Zamora the “Spaniard”—whose interest in the Philippines’ history extends as far as Pigafetta’s colonial account in his library—Fritz’s investment in the island nation is bureaucratic and nationalist, attributes that are later developed in the second half when he re-emerges as Mayor Fritz. While he plays host to the film crew, Fritz becomes obsessed with the affair between American movie star Vincent Moody and the Filipino girl Lina, going so far as to confront the actor in drunken jealous rage, confessing his distaste for “Americans, especially American men,” for their perceived encroachment on Filipino women (212). Later, during Fritz’s attempt to abduct Lina in broad daylight, his

driver/bodyguard/accomplice Nap recounts that the Mayor has a need to tell anti-colonial stories to his bound-and-gagged victims before he rapes them (257).

Nonetheless, Hagedorn, never a fan of single-dimensional villains,²⁴ makes it clear that such a character also dreams:

Fritz was haunted by a recurring dream in which he and Lolo Pablo rowed their *bangka* on Lake Ramayyah. There seemed to be no real purpose to their journey Lolo Pablo and Fritz climbed out and found themselves on an unfamiliar, uninhabited island overgrown with trees. Fritz glimpsed a broken, winding staircase through the foliage. The stairway led up to nowhere. . . . Farther on were the ruins of a great temple. Fritz and his grandfather exchanged glances, terrified and excited. Was this temple some sort of secret library hidden in the jungle? (208)

Although coming from a nationalist trajectory, the primitivist yearning for untouched, untainted secrets within the jungle represented here is unmistakable. Indeed, one could trace this sense of longing as directly connected with the way that the Tasaday were hailed as “pure” Filipinos and “a rally point for cultural supernationalists” (Lynch and Llamzon 12).²⁵

The peculiar thing, however, is that this dream is recounted in the second half of *Dream Jungle* in 1977, at which point the Taobo story has fallen under extreme scrutiny in the novel.²⁶ Fritz, present at the original meeting between Zamora and the President which set in motion the Taobo incident, was already observant of his government’s “legacy of lies, grandeur of delusions” (59). In other words, Fritz is all

²⁴ Hagedorn’s treatment of distasteful characters is discussed in “A Conversation with Jessica Hagedorn” by Karin Aguilar-San Juan.

²⁵ As Hemley points out, Ferdinand and Imelda Marcos were particularly “obsessed with the search of a common Filipino identity, a link with an ur-Filipino” (83).

²⁶ This is a discrepancy between the novel and history: as covered in my previous discussion, Iten’s report that brought the Tasaday under suspicion was published in 1986, after Marcos was overthrown.

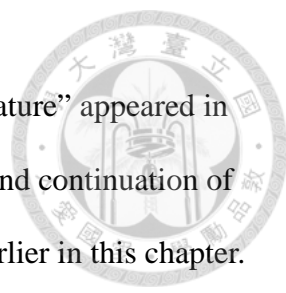
too aware of the constructed nature of the Taobo story and the machinations that would turn it into a public relations campaign for the government. In fact, the 1977 Mayor Fritz has effectively forgotten about the Taobo, as he spares no thought on the event even though his very introduction intimately implicates him in the government involvement towards the tribe. Nevertheless, even for one armed with a politician's cynicism, Fritz has not escaped the enticement of primitivism. Years after the "debunking" of the dream that the Taobo stand for, Fritz's dream in 1977 reveals a return of the same ideals that powered the Taobo dream in 1971.

A final illustration of the recurrent nature of primitivism is sharply captured in the form of a dream-like sequence that Hagedorn herself experienced in her 1974 interview with Manuel Elizalde in his mansion, an interview that was fictionalized in *Dream Jungle* through her stand-in character, the journalist Paz Marlow.²⁷ Neither Hagedorn nor Marlow was able to conduct a meaningful conversation with their obstinate interviewee(s), but at the end of their interview, both interviewers claim witness to a fleeting image of a boy with mahogany skin bounding across the garden, singing in a high-pitched voice, vanishing as swiftly as he appeared. Both were immediately reminded of the Tasaday/Taobo and the iconic children photographed by *National Geographic*, and both were suspicious of the spectacle as a staged performance or even a brief hallucination on their part. In *Dream Jungle*, Hagedorn names the boy Bodabil, a pun of "vaudeville": a satire show, a dramatic spectacle.²⁸ Perhaps this ghost-like existence, one that is not quite confirmable or capable of being rejected outright, can best illustrate the spectre of primitivism, which persists to dance across public imagination and academic theorization, and does not quite go away.

²⁷ A non-fictionalized version of this encounter can be found in Hagedorn's short piece "Jungle in Search of a Dream."

²⁸ This pun, another case of Hagedorn's play-on-words, is discussed in Hansen's interview.

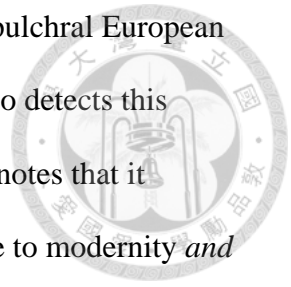
Primitivism Reconsidered



In 2011, Victor Li's essay "Primitivism and Postcolonial Literature" appeared in *The Cambridge History of Postcolonial Literature* as an extension and continuation of the critical project presented in his 2006 book that was discussed earlier in this chapter. Li's piece follows Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's formulations of "strategic essentialism" to position its own focus—postcolonial neo-primitivism—as a "strategic primitivism" (983). The actual strategies deployed by this strategic primitivism, according to Li, are spread into four categories: inversion, utopianism, magical realism, and parody. Following Li's categorizations, then, one can read *Dream Jungle* as a part of this chain of neo-primitivist texts in terms of its parodying not simply the primitivism espoused in Western media, but also in Filipino nationalist discourse. Li, however, cautions against the parody form, quoting Linda Hutcheon to note that "[a]s a form of ironic representation, parody is doubly coded in political terms: it both legitimizes and subverts that which it parodies" (qtd. in Li, "Primitivism" 1000). As Li puts it, parody "is thus double-edged in that it inscribes even as it undercuts that which it parodies" (1000). This complex relationship between *Dream Jungle* and its subject matter will be explored in more detail in the following chapter.

Yet prior to the rise of these neo-primitivist strategies are the two strains of primitivism discussed earlier: the nineteenth-century derogatory version that believes in evolutionary progress, and the twentieth-century redemptive one that celebrates and romanticizes the primitive as a salve to a troubled modernity. Significantly, Li identifies both of these primitivisms in Joseph Conrad's work *Heart of Darkness*. For the narrator Marlow, Li argues, the Africans represent "the instinctive, libidinal aspect of humanity that he finds threatening and that he wants restrained lest it erupt into monstrous savagery," but at the same time they also hint toward "a life world more

authentic and less repressed and enervated than that found in the sepulchral European city to which he returns after his sojourn in the Congo” (986). Li also detects this latter type of “arcadian primitivism” in Conrad’s text *Lord Jim*, but notes that it includes “both the excitement of discovering alternative ways of life to modernity *and* the sad realization that these alternatives are doomed to disappear even as they are discovered” (986). These dualities, as seen in my discussion in this chapter, are re-inscribed throughout the Tasaday/Taobo primitivist dream. This peculiar connection between the works of a modernist writer and a 1970s primitivist publicity stunt might help us understand *Dream Jungle*’s strategy to juxtapose the Tasaday hoax alongside the filming of *Apocalypse Now*, a film that famously drew its inspiration from *Heart of Darkness*. My next chapter will turn to this particular chain of texts.



Chapter Three



In the epilogue of *Model Minority Imperialism*, Victor Bascara puts forth what he calls a “chain of free associations” that draws connections from Giacomo Puccini’s opera *Madame Butterfly* (1904) to Claude-Michel Schönberg and Alain Boublil’s musical *Miss Saigon* (1989), from Joseph Conrad to Francis Ford Coppola, from representations of Vietnam to representations of the Philippines (139). In doing so, Bascara draws attention to a controversy that erupted over the casting in *Miss Saigon* during its premier in 1989, because its Eurasian/Asian characters were played by Caucasians in yellowface, and the Vietnamese heroine Kim was portrayed by Lea Salonga, a Filipina. In Bascara’s view, this incident reveals an ethos of interchangeability that can be observed throughout the other connections he cited, most notably in the use of the Philippines as substitution for Vietnam in the filming of Francis Coppola’s *Apocalypse Now*, and the Congo that runs analogous to the Thames in Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*. For Bascara, these substitutions

present an opportunity to apprehend new subjects amid old epistemologies, and old subjects amid new epistemologies. We can appreciate the palimpsest of memories of empire that becomes visible in Asian American cultural politics. (139)

As pointed out at the end of the previous chapter, Jessica Hagedorn’s *Dream Jungle* is ambivalently interconnected with the works of Joseph Conrad as well as *Apocalypse Now*, the production of the latter being laboriously recreated as the filming of the fictional *Napalm Sunset* in Hagedorn’s novel. In this chapter, I will follow the lead from Bascara and examine these connections in the “palimpsest of memories of empire” to ask how such connections might affect my reading of *Dream Jungle*.

Palimpsest Inscriptions

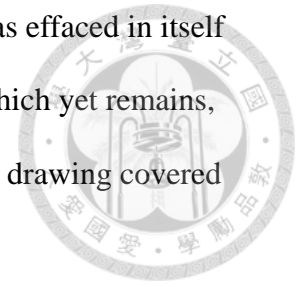
The “palimpsest” in Bascara’s phrase “palimpsest of memories of empire” refers to a metaphor based upon a peculiar phenomenon found in ancient manuscripts (139). In the Middle Ages, due to the scarcity of writing materials, older documents were sometimes “recycled” by erasing the originally inscribed text with chemicals until it could be written upon again. However, this erasure was not permanent, and the original text would re-surface after some time, appearing alongside the newly-imposed writings. This multi-layered text that features the old inscriptions—as well as the new ones written over the old—is called a palimpsest.

According to Sarah Dillon, the 1845 essay “The Palimpsest” by Thomas De Quincey is not the first to reference the phenomenon figuratively as a metaphor, but it is the one that “*inaugurated*—that is, both introduced and initiated the subsequent use of—the substantive concept of the palimpsest” (243).²⁹ As Dillon points out, the palimpsest as a concept has been widely utilized by disciplines as diverse as architecture and neuro-computing, and “it also occurs frequently in creative, critical and theoretical texts across the expansive fields of literature, philosophy and cultural studies” (243). One of the prominent examples she cites is the work of Michael Foucault, who draws upon the palimpsest imagery to define one of his central ideas. Genealogy, according to Foucault’s essay “Nietzsche, Genealogy, History,” “operates on a field of entangled and confused parchments, on documents which have been scratched over and recopied many times” (139).

Jacques Derrida also uses the palimpsest extensively in his theorizations as well. An example can be found in his essay “White Mythology: Metaphor in the Text of Philosophy”:

²⁹ Dillon’s essay cites Plutarch, St John Chrysostom and Samuel Taylor Coleridge as other figures that have utilized the palimpsest figuratively, often referring it to the human mind and memories (260).

What is White Mythology? It is metaphysics which has effaced in itself the fabulous scene which brought it into being, and which yet remains, active and stirring, inscribed in white ink, an invisible drawing covered over in the palimpsest. (11)



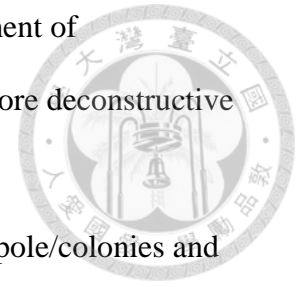
This passage from Derrida is in turn quoted by Gyan Prakash in “Postcolonial Criticism and Indian Historiography” insofar as it represents a useful way for Prakash to “undo the implacable oppositions of colonial thought—east-west, traditional-modern, primitive-civilized” (10). The relevance of the palimpsest in postcolonial deliberations then becomes visible as a metaphor for that which was violently suppressed and erased, but persists and re-emerges in defiant contention against the superimposed new inscriptions. As Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak argues in her celebrated essay “Can the Subaltern Speak?,” the “subjugated knowledge” of the colonized Other is embedded within history as “the subtext of the palimpsestic narrative of imperialism” and therefore should be acknowledged and recognized as such (281).

Closely related to the metaphor of the palimpsest are the Derridean concepts of under-erasure and double inscription, both of which have been deeply influential to the conception and affirmation of the postcolonial. In an essay “When was the ‘Post-Colonial’? Thinking at the Limit,” Stuart Hall for instance draws upon both of these ideas in his defense of the controversial prefix, the “post-” in the “post-colonial.” Instead of signifying a temporal periodisation or a linear movement, as its detractors would suggest, Hall argues that the “post” constitutes “a notion of a shift or a transition conceptualized as the reconfiguration of a field” (254).

Furthermore, in Hall’s definition, this shift is not

an epistemological ‘break’ in the Althusserian/structuralist sense but

more on the analogy of what Gramsci called a movement of deconstruction-reconstruction or what Derrida, in a more deconstructive sense, calls a 'double inscription'. (254)



For Hall, what breaks down the binary structure between the metropole/colonies and the colonial/postcolonial is precisely this double inscription which permeates both sides of the shift, and which opens up the post-colonial category from specific communities or temporalities towards the transnational and the global. With these definitions in place, Hall is able to state that

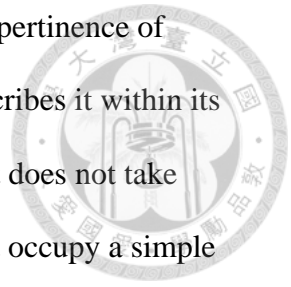
all the key concepts in the 'post-colonial', as in the general discourse of the 'posts', are operating, as Derrida would put it, 'under erasure'. They have been subjected to a deep and thorough-going critique, exposing their assumptions as a set of foundational effects. But this deconstruction does not abolish them. (255)

Instead, these concepts remain useful as means to thinking and theorizing, as long as they are utilized with full awareness of their deconstruction and limitations, in a manner not unlike the strategic essentialism and strategic primitivism that I have attempted to address in the previous chapter.

A more detailed account of these related concepts of under-erasure and double inscription can be found in "Signs Taken for Wonders: Questions of Ambivalence and Authority under a Tree outside Delhi" by Homi K. Bhabha, who engages with the question of the colonial text/English book and their implications. As Bhabha points out, the ambivalent positionality of colonial/English books such as Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* occupies the Derridean "space of double inscription." This is illustrated in Bhabha's essay with a quotation from Derrida's *Dissemination* (1981):

whenever any writing both marks and goes back over its mark with an

undecidable stroke . . . [this] double mark escapes the pertinence of authority of truth: it does not overturn it but rather inscribes it within its play as one of its functions or parts. This displacement does not take place, has not taken place once as an event. It does not occupy a simple place. It does not take place in writing. This dis-location [is what] writes/is written. (qtd. in Bhabha 150)



In other words, Bhabha reads the internal oppositions and conflicting discourses buried within these colonial/English texts—once again—into the palimpsest metaphor, where contradictory inscriptions vie for control but at the same time remain intertwined.

A similar but subtly different use of the double inscription concept working in conjunction with a key related idea—that of “re-inscription”—appears in Peter Hulme’s classic study *Colonial Encounters: Europe and the Native Caribbean 1492-1797* (1986). In chapter three, “Prospero and Caliban,” Hulme points out that the Shakespearean play *The Tempest* operates with two “frames of reference”—one Mediterranean, one Atlantic—and that any straightforward reading is necessarily complicated due to the ways that the “Atlantic discourse is itself often articulated through a re-inscription of the Mediterranean terms” (106). The re-inscription here is used literally, referring to the ways that Shakespeare intentionally obscures the geography of the island setting through a meshing of familiar Mediterranean locations alongside New World references. In Hulme’s reading, then, *The Tempest* resembles a palimpsest on which there are two texts, an original Mediterranean text with, superimposed upon it, an Atlantic text written entirely in the spaces between the Mediterranean words, the exception being Caliban, who is thereby doubly inscribed, a discursive monster, a compromise

formation bearing the imprint of the conflict that has produced him.

(108-09)

Contrasting cases such as Shakespeare's use of the Mediterranean term "tempest" over the Caribbean "hurricane," Hulme concludes that the play contains elements that returns to and can be understood by the Mediterranean discourse. However, this Mediterranean framework is contested by the Atlantic that lurks within the text, and the former is gradually and subtly overtaken by the latter, the Caribbean, the discourse of Caliban. However, as Hulme makes clear, Caliban himself does not adhere to either of the discourses, his very existence an embodiment of the discursive contradiction between the two "texts."

Hulme's reading of Shakespeare's play pushes on to offer a persuasive argument that pierces through the Jacobean drama staged by Prospero and points directly towards the illegitimacy of his reign over the island. The "sub-plot" of Caliban's coup d'état turns out to be essential to Prospero's obsession with repetition and, as Hulme argues, takes its place at the centre of the stage. Prospero also places upon Caliban a "double inscription," firstly making him out to be another Antonio whose usurpation this time will surely fail, and secondly making him out to be a revolting slave that cannot possibly lay claim to the island. It is only through these maneuvers that Prospero is capable of denying his own traumatic past as a usurper, a guest that subdued the host through violence, and yet, for all his power, is still dependent upon Caliban. For Hulme, this pathological relationship of violence and denial is a fitting metaphor for not only colonizers, but also colonial historians, whose claims and inscriptions upon colonial history have been and are still being challenged and contested.

Thus far, I have in this chapter attempted to trace some of the origins of the

palimpsest metaphor, certain key concepts such as “under-erasure” and “double inscription” that were expanded from the palimpsest, and the various ways these concepts have been put into action. The titular maneuver named by this thesis—that of reinscription—is closely tied to these concepts, but is also subtly different, with an emphasis on the repeated, secondary nature of the “re-“ prefix. Like the palimpsest, the act of reinscription also appears in different disciplines, notably in feminist discussions.³⁰ However, the act of reinscription has taken on a specific meaning in Edward Said’s *Culture and Imperialism* (1993), a text I briefly discussed in Chapter One. Drawing upon Fanon who in turn draws upon the Hegelian dialectic, Said uses *reinscription* to represent the act

to rechart and then occupy the place in imperial cultural forms reserved for subordination, to occupy it self-consciously, fighting for it on the very same territory once ruled by a consciousness that assumed the subordination of a designated inferior other. (210)

In other words, reinscription for Said is a form of resistance, a way for the colonized subject to reshape and respond to narratives from the metropole. For Said, resistant reinscriptions like Aimé Césaire’s *Une Tempête* are not vindictive “*ressentiments*” or assaults against Western culture (212). Instead, they constitute a move to re-imagine one’s history as coherent and integrative, offering “an alternative way of conceiving human history” (216). In this chapter, then, I will investigate “reinscription” in terms of Said’s definition, but also its broader usages drawn from the palimpsest, in order to highlight and examine the various texts implicated in *Dream Jungle*.

As evidenced in Said’s discussion, the amount of postcolonial alternative

³⁰ Works that address the crossing of feminism and poststructuralist concepts—such as reinscription—include *Feminists Theorize the Political*, edited by Judith Butler and Joan W. Scott, and “Social Criticism without Philosophy: An Encounter between Feminism and Postmodernism” by Nancy Fraser and Linda J. Nicholson.

re-tellings is staggering; from classical tragedies to Shakespearean comedies, postcolonial writers have proven more than eager to transform these materials to reflect and also refract their perceptions. The line of reinscriptions that I am explicitly concerned with in this chapter begins from *Heart of Darkness* by Joseph Conrad. The complex subject matter and controversial depictions in this particular novel have provoked and inspired a library of postcolonial texts that attempted to reinscribe Conrad's text, including works from authors as varied as Chinua Achebe, Ngugi wa Thiong'o, Tayeb Salih, and V.S. Naipaul.³¹ The "reinscription" that this thesis will first touch upon, however, is neither a novel nor especially postcolonial. I am referring to Francis Ford Coppola's film *Apocalypse Now*, the production of which features extensively in Jessica Hagedorn's fictional account in *Dream Jungle*.

The Film

Originally written as a "gung-ho, macho" war film that would have featured a final battle against hordes of Viet Cong, *Apocalypse Now* appears to have been an uneven project from the very beginning.³² The switch from action flick to brooding artsy trip appears to lie in the decision to incorporate elements of *The Odyssey*, *The Golden Bough*, and *Heart of Darkness* into the story. John Milius, the co-screenwriter, asserts that "Kilgore was like the Cyclops . . . the playboy bunnies were like the Sirens."³³ However, the most widely discussed appropriations in the film position Captain Willard as Marlow, the Nung River as the Congo, and Colonel Kurtz as Kurtz. Following Marlow's voyage into the grotesque and madness, Willard goes through a

³¹ Specific texts that "write back" to Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* from these authors include, respectively, *Things Fall Apart* (1958), *The River Between* (1965), *Season of Migration to the North* (1966), and *A Bend in the River* (1979).

³² In the *Hearts of Darkness* documentary, Francis Coppola confesses that "I always thought the [original] ending was weak. . . . It didn't answer any of the moral issues; it got into a real gung-ho, macho kind of a comic book ending."

³³ This description also appears in an interview in the *Hearts of Darkness* documentary.

similar ordeal through the raging Vietnam War and into Cambodia until he comes face to face with “the horror.” Although far from a Saidian postcolonial reinscription, *Apocalypse Now* does seem to exhibit some of its traits, namely taking a canonical work and re-narrating it in a new context, thereby presenting an alternative response to the original discourse.

The abandoned scenes of the French Plantation, revealed in the 2001 *Redux* version of the film, seem to reinforce this reciprocity between Francis Coppola’s vision with the old colonial powers. However, unlike Conrad’s original, Captain Willard—standing in as Marlow—does not consider himself a part of colonialism. Moreover, the script for the Frenchmen attempts to distance American interventionism from the ghost of imperialism. “You Americans fight for the biggest nothing in history,” taunts the plantation owner Hubert de Marais. A supposedly transparent condemnation of the US involvement in the Vietnam War, upon closer examination, reverts into an apology that resolutely embraces the myth of American exceptionalism and renounces its ties with imperialisms in the past. Far from exposing the similarities in the imperialist motivations that drive each group, this scene is constructed as a contrasting binary opposition that highlights the difference between the French colonials and the American soldiers, denying possible analogies that might be drawn between the two.

The extent of denial goes further, as the entire sequence is framed from begin to end with two identical shots of Willard staring into the fog, suggesting that the plantation encounter is a dreamlike illusion, as ungraspable as Hagedorn’s own primitivist fantasy I discussed in the previous chapter. *Apocalypse Now* as a whole is widely known for being surreal and psychedelic, but no other scene in the movie has required such a forceful device to emphasize its illusory quality, thus rendering its

only connection linking the Americans with colonialism a hallucination that cannot be confirmed, a nightmare that can perhaps be forgotten.

Ultimately, however, all these defensive maneuvers prove unsatisfactory, as evidenced in the removal of the entire dream-like plantation sequence from the original theatrical release. This triple denial that shadowed and finally throttled Francis Coppola's closest attempt to engage with the implications of US imperialism is symptomatic of an overall reluctance and amnesia within the US consciousness, or as Victor Bascara puts it, a "chronic resistance of American culture to casting the United States as imperial" (xvi). Two decades after the original release, *Redux* seemingly overcame the third denial and allowed the nightmare to resurface, but it is still repressed with the strappings of the first and second maneuvers, arguably unsettling the film's claim to be anti-war and anti-imperial.

Indeed, the supposed anti-war and subversive messages embedded in *Apocalypse Now* have been met with a number of suspicions and critiques since its release. For example, Keith Solomon casts doubt on the purported properties of *Apocalypse Now* in his essay "The Spectacle of War and the Specter of 'The Horror'." As Solomon notes, Captain Willard is a far cry from the Marlow of Conrad, who is detached and even disgusted by the excesses of his colonial peers. Willard in fact embraces the role of a soldier, and—as a Sampan scene restored in the *Redux* version shows—has no qualms about shooting civilians if they inconvenience his mission. Rather than being bitter about the militarism or exploitation imposed upon Vietnam, Solomon argues that "[Willard's] disillusionment is in . . . the lack of professionalism or seriousness shown by US troops" (28). Willard in fact goes beyond Marlow's fascination for Kurtz and expresses an outright admiration for the colonel's brutal efficiency in dealing with the Viet Cong. In Solomon's view, *Apocalypse Now*

emerges as the opposite of anti-war, as it espouses a revisionist argument that believes the war could have been won if “real” soldiers like Kurtz and Willard were given free rein. Francis Coppola’s film is therefore located by Solomon within a vein of “recuperative” Vietnam films that attempted to assuage the wounded masculinity and humiliation of US defeat. Even though Willard ultimately refuses to take up Kurtz’s reins, he is able to “‘liberate’ Colonel Kurtz from his own madness” (29), a maneuver that in Solomon’s view terminates and erases the US involvement in Vietnam.

This revisionist position Solomon points out may seem like empty saber-rattling, but it becomes ironically and chillingly plausible when one considers the place that Francis Coppola chose to shoot his film. The story of *Apocalypse Now* is set in Vietnam and Cambodia, but the film production took place in the Philippines. The Congo in Conrad’s text is re-presented in the film’s fictional Nung River, which is based on the actual Mekong River that runs through the Indochina Peninsula. The Mekong is in turn re-presented by the Philippine Pagsanjan River, where most of the film was shot.³⁴ Contingency and convenience may have brought Francis Coppola to the island nation, but the crossing of Vietnam and Cambodia with the Philippines ends up recalling a colonial history that lends credence to the revisionist position suggested by Solomon. I refer to the “successful” subjugation of the Philippines by the US military in 1899, whose genocidal scorch-earth tactics against the local population went on largely unopposed within US itself.³⁵ Francis Coppola’s staging of this revisionist argument within the Philippines therefore becomes an uncanny re-inscription of that older imperialist war, drawn alongside the so-called

³⁴ For references to the Pagsanjan river where most of the film production took place, see Eleanor Coppola’s *Notes* 94.

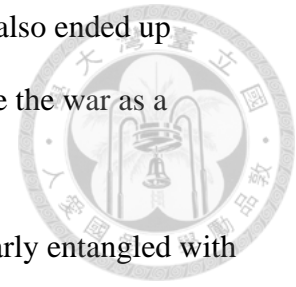
³⁵ For a critical account of the genocidal operations of the US occupying forces in the Philippines and the indifference to these acts from within the US, see Rodríguez 120-49. Similar to Gonzalez’s, Werrlein’s, and Cumings’s positions, Rodríguez considers the 1899 war as a continuation of Manifest Destiny and its genocidal treatment of Native Americans.

interventionist war on Vietnam.

But the contingency between the Philippines, Vietnam and Cambodia does not end with the formal closing of colonial history. Amy Kaplan, at the end of her essay “Left Alone with America,” draws attention to how oblivious the Coppola couple were to the imperial contexts that enabled the production of their “anti-war” film in the Philippines: the aforementioned history of US conquest and “tutelage,” but also the more recent concurrent and intimate relationship between the US government and the Marcos dictatorship. The height of the irony culminates in US-made helicopters that were sold to the Philippines and then lent to the film crew (because, Kaplan notes, the US military refused to support this “anti-war” film), even as the helicopters were called away in the middle of filming to attack Muslim guerrillas that opposed the nationalist regime. Neither Francis Ford Coppola nor Eleanor Coppola was able to catch on to its significance, but for Kaplan, this moment of overlap and breakdown between fiction, history, and actual ongoing warfare makes visible the forms of US imperialism that permeate the whole production.

Kaplan may, however, have underestimated the extent of cooperation between *Apocalypse Now* and proponents of US imperialist discourse. In “Bulls in the (Indo) China Shop: Coppola’s ‘Vietnam’ Revisited,” Gerald Sussman reveals that Francis Coppola did end up striking deals with the US Department of Defense, securing assistance from the Clark Airbase and Subic Naval Station on Luzon in exchange for compromises in the script. For example, Sussman points out that the villages portrayed in the film were originally supposed to fly South Vietnamese flags, but they were later changed into North Vietnamese ones. In the original unmodified script, then, the US attacks were indiscriminate assaults against civilians that they were ostensibly there to save. Therefore, this move to replace the flags not only

dramatically softened the blow of the original anti-war message; it also ended up colluding with the imperialist justifications and revisions to inscribe the war as a necessary “allied” intervention.



Moreover, as Sussman points out, Francis Coppola was similarly entangled with the Marcos regime and its war on “insurgents.” In return for the support from the Philippine armed forces, the director offered funds that helped equip the Huey helicopters with machine guns, the same helicopters that in Kaplan’s account flew off during the film shoot to attack the rebels. In effect, the fictional war of Francis Coppola’s film ended up funding a real war, complete with the same machines and weaponry used in Vietnam. Sussman goes on to argue that in fact, the film production itself resembled an army that laid siege to the Philippines during its year-long imposition stretching from March 1976 to May 1977,³⁶ noting that Francis Coppola “had indeed built up a partly simulated and partly real military infrastructure in the Philippines, a war within his [fictional] ‘war’” (25). In this sense, then, *Apocalypse Now* not only re-inscribes imperialism through its collaborations and compromises, but its very production constitutes a re-staging of an US invasion, complete with its usual characteristics of excess, decadence, and exploitation.³⁷

Apart from the manipulation of locations, another profoundly problematic substitution in *Apocalypse Now* lies in the selection of actors. In her diary/journal/memoir *Notes on the Making of Apocalypse Now* (1979), Eleanor Coppola reveals that “[s]everal hundred South Vietnamese people were recruited from

³⁶ For the beginning and finishing dates of the film production, see Eleanor Coppola’s *Notes* 21 and 204.


³⁷ In *The Sorrows of Empire*, Chalmers Johnson offers a critical look on the effect of US troops on foreign soil. Using the Okinawa US base as an example, he lists these influences as representative wherever US troops are present: “[e]xpropriation of the island’s most valuable land for bases, extraterritorial status for American troops who committed crimes . . . bars and brothels crowding around . . . endless accidents, noise, sexual violence, drunk-driving crashes, drug use, and environmental pollution” (8).

a refugee camp near Manila to play North Vietnamese in the film” (29). When examined in combination with the script’s changing of flags from Sussman’s account, it becomes clear that the North and South Vietnamese are considered to be interchangeable for the production. Furthermore, Eleanor Coppola sheds light on the depiction of aborigines, who underwent a re-inscription beginning from their Conrad inspiration—the Congo tribes—to the Montagnards of Cambodia, and finally were played by the Ifugao people of Luzon, who were specifically hired because of their primitive attire (her husband, Eleanor Coppola confides, didn’t want to spend money dressing up the Filipino extras).³⁸ The portrayal of the natives in Conrad’s original was already controversial, as seen in Chinua Achebe’s famous accusations in his essay “An Image of Africa: Racism in Conrad’s ‘Heart of Darkness.’” However, Francis Coppola goes even further, reducing the natives in *Apocalypse Now* into mute, ghostly caricatures and violent, savage images that barely register as part of the backdrop for the clash between Willard and Kurtz. To paraphrase Achebe, the Philippines—and by extension Vietnam and Cambodia—have been reduced to “the role of props for the break-up of one petty [American] mind” (258). It is all the more ironic that Francis Coppola should proclaim in the 1979 Cannes press conference that “my film is not about Vietnam. It *is* Vietnam.”³⁹

From the sidelines of the sprawling set of *Apocalypse Now*, Eleanor Coppola had taken charge of a behind-the-scenes project that would document her husband’s film production. Unfortunately, the film and tapes from her efforts were abandoned at one point due to disagreements over editing and the point-of-view that the documentary would present. In 1990, however, Fax Bahr and George Hickenlooper offered to re-make the documentary that never came to be from the shelved materials,

³⁸ These revelations are found in the *Hearts of Darkness* documentary.

³⁹ This press conference is also recorded in the *Hearts of Darkness* documentary.

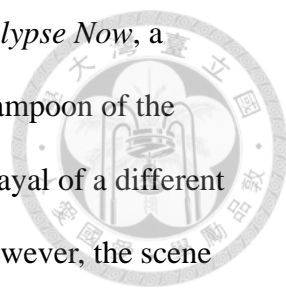


and Eleanor Coppola gave them her approval (*Notes* 287). The result from this collaboration between three directors is *Hearts of Darkness: A Filmmaker's Apocalypse*, a film-about-a-film whose name references and pluralizes Conrad's original text that inspired Francis Coppola's film. Aside from an additional layer of reinscription, this time from the lens of a camera operated by a woman, the documentary edited from Eleanor Coppola's raw footage was able to capture some more of the disturbing elements lurking behind the production of *Apocalypse Now*. For example, Dean Tavoularis, the production designer, happily admits on camera that hiring the local people as prop builders required only a dollar or three per day, a lot less compensation than back in New York or Hollywood. He then absentmindedly adds that "I hope we weren't taking advantage of people." In an interview that he later regrets, actor Sam Bottoms admits to have taken drugs like marijuana, acid, and speed, all during shooting, adding resignedly that "we were bad. We were just bad boys."⁴⁰ There is also a revealing quotation recorded from Francis Coppola himself, who comments on Typhoon Olga which arrived in May 1976 during the film shoot: "it was knocking out centers of civilizations . . . and then I realized certain sets have been destroyed." The devastating damage to the island nation apparently runs parallel to the destruction of an exquisite film set.⁴¹

Finally, consider the testimony of cinematographer Vittorio Storaro, who quotes Francis Coppola describing the film as "not just a documentary, but a main show, in the sense that wherever America goes, they make a big show on everything . . . it's part of the major fantasy that American people has." More specifically, this quotation

⁴⁰ The *Guardian* obituary for Sam Bottoms quotes him saying "I realised after that interview that I had sort of broken an actors' code; I regret that very much. I believe that whatever it takes for an actor to get to a scene, that's his business. And I don't think that's something to be shared with the public." Bottoms is likely the model that Hagedorn's character Moody in *Dream Jungle* is based upon.

⁴¹ The effects of the Typhoon Olga are discussed in the *Hearts of Darkness* documentary and Eleanor Coppola's *Notes* 67-77. According to a Reuters report on May 21st, 1976, ten thousand people had to be evacuated and forty-one were confirmed to be killed in the disaster.



refers to the famous Ride of the Valkyries helicopter scene in *Apocalypse Now*, a scene that is usually interpreted as a reference to Nazi Germany, a lampoon of the bombastic mindset of the American military in Vietnam, and a portrayal of a different (or perhaps similar?) kind of madness from Kurtz's degradation. However, the scene also has potential to be seen straightforwardly as a glorification and celebration of military might and excess, as demonstrated in a scene from the film *Jarhead* (2005) where marine soldiers cheer through the scene, oblivious of the supposed critique. Keith Solomon also offers a close analysis of the Valkyrie scene, observing that the gaze of the camera—and by extension the audience—is planted securely within the attacking helicopters, not the putatively Vietnamese villagers on the ground. He further notes that the dehumanized, almost casual and comical portrayal of Vietnamese figures dying in the attack, as compared to the grim realistic depiction of US casualties, again affirms the film's positionality and allegiance to the US military, in spite of its purported intention to criticize its activities. Further, Solomon contends that the hook of the spectacle of warfare as entertainment functions in a manner not unlike the media coverage of the First Gulf War in 1991, a maneuver that renders us as viewers complicit in the imperial process.

In critical discussions of Francis Coppola's *Apocalypse Now*, it is sometimes easy to position the film next to the novel upon which it is based—in this case, Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*—thereby placing the film under scrutiny and drawing conclusions from perceived differences in the texts. However, as Achebe's earlier intervention suggests, Conrad's novel is far from an innocent text in regards to imperialism, having re-inscribed much of the discourse it aims to critique and therefore garnered its share of controversies and objections. For example, in *Conrad and Imperialism: Ideological Boundaries and Visionary Frontiers*, Benita Parry reads

Conrad's tale "as a militant denunciation and a reluctant affirmation of imperialist civilization, as a fiction that . . . exposes and colludes in imperialism's mystifications" (39). One can detect a considerably different tone here compared to Achebe's angry condemnation, but Parry makes no excuses for Marlow and Conrad's imperialist tendencies that lurk within the contradictions of the novel.

Edward Said, whose first book was a study of Conrad, professes that in his first encounter with the Polish writer's works, he felt like reading "a story written out of bits of my life and put together in a haunting and fantastically obsessive way. I've been hooked on it ever since" (qtd. in Salusinszky 133). Despite his personal feelings, however, Said concedes with some reluctance in *Culture and Imperialism* that "'Heart of Darkness' works so effectively because its politics and aesthetics are, so to speak, imperialist" (25). Drawing attention to the similarity in the assertive power of Kurtz to Marlow's control as narrator, Said argues that "like narrative, imperialism has monopolized the entire system of representation" (26). With these considerations, Said reads *Heart of Darkness* not simply as literature but as an integral part of the colonial "scramble for Africa" that ran concurrent to Conrad's publication, because "[t]o represent Africa is to enter the battle over Africa, inevitably connected to later resistance, decolonization, and so forth" (80). In the following discussion of Hagedorn's *Dream Jungle*, then, I wish to extend Said's critical project to argue that to represent the Philippines is to enter the battle over that island nation.

Reinscribing *Dream Jungle*

As I mentioned above, Jessica Hagedorn's *Dream Jungle* is not strictly a Saidian reinscription, but it faithfully re-stages the film production of *Apocalypse Now* within its narrative through a fictional version entitled *Napalm Sunset*. Using the character

Tony Pierce as a not-so-subtle rendition of Francis Ford Coppola, Hagedorn was able to recreate the cast and film shoot through additional names and coincidental circumstances. As my previous analysis of *Apocalypse Now* suggests, the film is a reinscription in multiple senses of the word, as demonstrated in its explicit strategy to re-interpret and re-imagine Joseph Conrad's novel *Heart of Darkness*, but also the implicit maneuvers within the film narrative and its production process that re-inscribe imperialist epistemologies. Hagedorn's rendition of the making of *Apocalypse Now* can therefore be described as a reinscription of a reinscription, a meta-reinscription, with a critical focus on the unsettling aspects of that process. In fact, imageries that are representative of the reinscribed palimpsest can be found both in the actual Francis Coppola film as well as in Hagedorn's novel.

In the famous opening scenes of *Apocalypse Now*, an experimental technique is utilized in compressing multiple different footages upon each other, creating a multi-layered filmic palimpsest where the images of the "Vietnam" jungle being bombed by helicopters with napalm, the upside-down face of Willard, the hanging fan in his Saigon hotel room and the rotating helicopter rotors are meshed together. A similar technique is used for the final closing scenes, where the shot of the patrol boat leaving the compound is compiled with the ominous face of a statue and Willard's paranoid, camouflage painted face, with a fleeting return of the helicopters and napalm flames to finish it off. In each of these instances, the images co-exist simultaneously in an uneasy juxtaposition that works in cohesion and in contradiction with each other; sometimes they are synchronized and sometimes they appear in succession, but they always overlap and seep into each other.⁴² In contrast, Hagedorn's *Dream Jungle* cannot and does not show the film being produced by Tony

⁴² For a description on this experimental technique being put into practice in the editing room see Eleanor Coppola's *Notes* 206.

Pierce. However, the palimpsest imagery still makes an unforgettable appearance in a psychedelic scene between the character Rizalina (also known as Lina) and the actor Moody, lovers who need to figure out what would happen to their relationship because the filming has been completed.



Previous to this climatic crisis, Lina has sought answers in vain throughout *Dream Jungle* from a variety of sources, ranging from the colonial materials of Pigafetta she took from Zamora’s library, from dialogue with the “conquistador” Zamora himself, from her run-in with the nationalist Mayor Fritz, and from her final appeal to Aling Belén, the local witch and primitivist/nativist matriarch. When none of these discourses offer her respite or satisfaction, Lina turns to an alternative: a recurrent tiger dream of hers, manifesting in a Bengal tiger named Shiva that is flown in from California for a scene in the film. She finds her answer: “[t]he tiger blinked its amazing eyes and roared. As if to say, Yes, yes. It’s about time! Will you feed me? Lina felt a great joy” (270). The imagery of the tiger, however, continues to haunt Lina, until her encounter with Moody. In this final moment of intimacy and negotiation between the girl and the movie star, the tigers are set free in an uncontainable overflow:

Tigers danced on the walls and ceiling, on the bed of tangled sheets on which she and Moody thrashed and moaned. Pagodas of tigers, floating islands of tigers. Pouncing roaming, prowling. Out of a sea of tigers rose her tiger-faced mother, father, and twin brothers. Rose a glaring Zamora López de Legazpi. (272)

Lina was the sole survivor of a ship wreck that drowned her siblings and her sexually abusive father. Further, at this point in the narrative, she has ran away from her mother and Zamora for four years, gave birth to her baby, and made a living as a strip

dancer in a Manila pub. The unbounded tigers and these traumatic figures in her life combine into a layered imagery that hint towards the inscriptions upon Lina's body and her lingering thoughts and regrets, even as she is being penetrated by Moody; another inscription, another figure overtaken by tigers. From Moody's point of view, however, there is a different imagery taking shape:

He gazed down into her face, shimmering with what he mistook at first for beads of sweat, then realized was some sort of caul. Stretched taut like a second skin over the delicate surface of face, her face—Lina who was not Lina now but something or someone else. A mirror to myriad other female faces—Lori, Sandy, and Marian, his mother. (272)

In a similar fashion to Lina's vision, Moody is visited by traumatic figures in his own life, his wife and child that he abandoned back in the US, and his mother who survived the betrayal and death of his father by raising him. Following the metaphor of the re-inscribed palimpsest, one can read this vision as a revelation of Moody's projections and inscriptions upon Lina, as her face is transformed to present whatever he desired to see. Furthermore, some thoughts running through Moody's mind attest to the transfiguration upon Lina: "[t]he caul over her face unearthly. . . . *The earth seemed unearthly*" (273). Moody here recalls this latter phrase—a quotation from Joseph Conrad—stated unthinkingly by Tony Pierce earlier in the novel. The parallel between the earth of the Philippines and the unfathomable inscriptions represented by the caul arguably points to Lina as symbolic of the island nation itself; its feminization, exploitation, and coercion into a provider of gendered and sexualized labor.⁴³ However, it is important to note that Lina, not Moody, is the one directing this particular encounter, unlike the previous interactions between the two, which

⁴³ This reading follows the work of Neferti X. M. Tadiar, who reads the Philippines as a "hostess nation, catering to the demands and desires of her clients—multinational capital and the U.S. government and military" (*Things Fall Away* 26).

were dominated by Moody's one-sided advances. The resolution from this final negotiation, with Lina taking up residence in Moody's old house in the US and the actor staying in the Philippines, also seems to suggest a possibility to reverse the power structure that shadowed the relationship between the two. Finally, if we return to Bascara's line of associations introduced in the beginning of this chapter, this scene between Lina and Moody and its aftermath can be identified as a powerful and positive reinscription of the tragic climatic resolution that features in both *Madame Butterfly* and *Miss Saigon*.

In addition to these imageries, there are other forms of reinscription in Hagedorn's novel that deserve critical attention. *Dream Jungle* faithfully represents not only Francis Coppola's film, but also Eleanor Coppola's behind-the-scenes project, recreating it through the character of Janet Pierce. Like the *Hearts of Darkness* documentary pieced together from her real-life counterpart's footage, Janet's project stands as an exposé that documents and inscribes the unsettling elements in Francis Coppola's film-making process.⁴⁴ Unlike the real documentary, which mentions money, drugs, but shies away from sex, Janet's camera frame does not discriminate; the absurdity of Hollywood extravagance and pleasures in the middle of a rain forest, the exploitation of the local populace, as well as the sexual tourism enjoyed by the actors are all coolly captured and duly inscribed.

Besides recreating the behind-the-scenes efforts, the novel devotes a chapter to represent Eleanor Coppola's other project that subverts and exposes the narrative of Francis Coppola's epic-making, namely her personal journal which was later published as *Notes: On the Making of Apocalypse Now* (1979). Some gruesome details disclosed in the *Notes* made their way into the novel in unexpected places,

⁴⁴ Here I am following Amy Kaplan, who points out that the *Hearts of Darkness* documentary from Eleanor Coppola "stands awkwardly between an exposé and a publicity reel" (18).

such as the episode with dead body props that—to the horror of the characters Paz and Pepito—turn out to be real cadavers that were mistakenly procured by the film crew.⁴⁵ In this chapter, however, Hagedorn opts for a more direct reinscription of Eleanor Coppola’s *Notes*; emulating her diary style, her intimate personal tone, as well as her reluctant self-reflexivity that observes the rampant decadence and considers her own complicity, but finally stops short of recognizing the Philippines as anything other than an exotic curiosity and backdrop. But perhaps the sharpest strategy that Hagedorn deploys is in naming the chapter “Excerpts from Janet Cattaneo Pierce’s Diary,” which follows a format identical to earlier chapters that drew upon colonial history from 1521, the “Excerpts from Antonio Pigafetta’s account of Magellan’s expedition.”⁴⁶ This deft move allows Hagedorn to highlight the similar attitudes and assumptions shared by these seemingly different journals that inscribe the Philippines through their narratives. For Hagedorn, the journal by Janet—as a mirror for the “notes” by Eleanor Coppola—is evidently unable to venture far from the patterns utilized by Pigafetta’s colonial inscriptions, and as a result renders the Philippines and its people invisible despite her liberal sensibilities and budding self-awareness.

Thankfully, in Hagedorn’s narrative, the right to inscribe is not limited to the privileged Pierces. Characters who are peripheral in the power structure, such as Rizalina and journalist Paz Marlowe (whose name references Conrad’s narrator), act as observers that enjoy specific vantage points over the chaos of the film set and perhaps the nation itself. Indeed, the chapter directly following Janet’s diary comes from a long-dead character that was only referenced in passing and in flashbacks, yet this chapter is also arguably one of the most interesting in the novel. I am referring to

⁴⁵ For Eleanor Coppola’s brief account of the incident, see Eleanor Coppola’s *Notes* 126; it is fictionalized in *Dream Jungle* 238-42.

⁴⁶ Chapters containing Pigafetta’s accounts on Magellan can be found on page 1, 88, 92, 103 in the novel, while Janet’s chapter appears on page 275.

“Mi Último Adiós,” a transcript of recordings that contain narrated history from Paz Marlowe’s mother, Pilar de los Santos Marlowe, in her last days dying of cancer.

As Paz points out in this chapter, the title chosen by Pilar—meaning “my last farewell”—is an ironic appropriation of the famous poem by Philippine national hero José Rizal, composed before his execution at the hands of Spanish colonial authorities (280). The original poem is an anti-colonial manifesto that dreams of decolonization and nation-building with its dying breath, but Pilar’s farewell presents a drastically different project. Addressed to Paz, her daughter, the monologue tells a personal and familial story replete with Roman Catholicism, covert romance, class guilt, a scandalous marriage, unborn siblings and eccentric relatives. The style of the narrative is fragmented and sporadic, a stream-of-consciousness soliloquy full of anecdotes, double takes and afterthoughts. Pilar herself is uncertain what to make of her peculiar narration to her daughter, asking “[w]hy am I telling you this?” and admitting that she wonders “what you are going to do with all this information” (285). Placed immediately next to the organized, rational diary of Janet Pierce at the closing of the novel, Pilar’s chapter seem like an aberration, a non-sequitur that comes out of nowhere and leads into nowhere. Indeed, most reviews of *Dream Jungle* elect to sidestep this singularity in Hagedorn’s novel as if it were some kind of short lapse or faux pas that they politely ignore.

However, I would argue that Pilar’s narration is the one story in *Dream Jungle* that most challenges and resists the Philippines as it has been inscribed by Pigafetta and Janet/Eleanor Coppola, Zamora/Elizalde and Tony/Francis Coppola, or perhaps even by José Rizal and Paz Marlowe herself. Structurally, Pilar’s oral history stands opposite to the written inscriptions that are necessarily complicit in colonial and neocolonial projects, as well as the visual inscriptions from *National Geographic*

Tasaday photos or the epic “Vietnam” movies. In terms of purpose and tone, Pilar’s intimate familial confession departs sharply from the territorializing project of Pigafetta or the heroic nationalism in Rizal; it offers no easy answers or closure in its story, and aspires to no grand narrative. In my reading, then, “Mi Último Adiós” presents a radical alternative to the earlier models of representation, functioning as a bottom-up narrative that renders the Philippines visible through a localized representation of its people, families and personal stories. Since Hagedorn positions the chapter next to the film production, Janet’s diary, and the Pigafetta materials that the diary recalls, Pilar’s text arguably becomes a Saidian reinscription that “writes back” to these previous inscriptions, as a form of resistance and also a strikingly distinct response from a gendered, local Filipina point of view.

Finally, an additional form of reinscription can be located near the end of the novel, revealed within the efforts of the Filipino local film director Pepito Ponce de León. Although drastically and structurally a far cry from the trajectory presented in Pilar’s narrative, Hagedorn offers a sympathetic and encouraging take on Pepito’s attempted appropriation of American pop culture into his own work. As Pepito confesses openly, his latest film, *The Shark’s Lament*, is “a combination *Jaws* and *Deep Blue Sea*, Filipino style” (314). Indeed, the novel briefly mentions an earlier project of Pepito’s, titled *Circumnavigation*, which was based on the Magellan expedition (238). In his own way, then, Pepito is reshaping and responding to not only hegemonic Hollywood but also layers of colonial history, and he does not pursue a nationalist, primitivist or nativist position but one of commercialized, postmodern play and pastiche. Shyh-jen Fuh points out in “‘At Home in the World’: Transnationalism and the Question of Belonging in Jessica Hagedorn’s *Dream Jungle*” that Hagedorn is not unaware of the danger of assimilation in such a

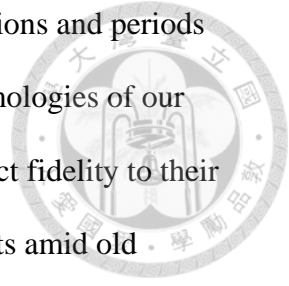
postmodern maneuver, arguing that the author “saliently registers the risk of homogeneity in the current global cultural exchange—one which tends to tilt towards the pull of the metropole” (34). Nevertheless, Fuh identifies a similar trajectory between Pepito and the author herself, arguing that “[l]ike Pepito, Hagedorn appropriates the Global/American form of expression in order to make her own voice of ‘resistance and rebellion’ be heard” (36). In other words, if Paz Marlowe the reporter is an explicit stand-in for Hagedorn and her journalistic efforts in uncovering the Tasaday story, then Pepito the director is an implicit figure that arguably more closely resembles Hagedorn’s creative strategies and ideals.

Reinscribing Imperialism?

In this chapter, I have attempted to move from Conrad’s rendition of the Congo, to Francis Coppola’s reinscription of Conrad and the Vietnam War, to Hagedorn’s treatment of colonial history and of the Coppolas’ adventure in the Philippines. If we add in the Thames that Marlow invokes at the beginning of Conrad’s text, there would be five rivers, fictional or factual, represented in this chain of representation and reinscription: the Thames that flows in both Marlow’s England and ancient Roman times, the Belgian Congo, the Mekong River and the fictional Nung River, and finally the Pagsanjan River in the Philippines.

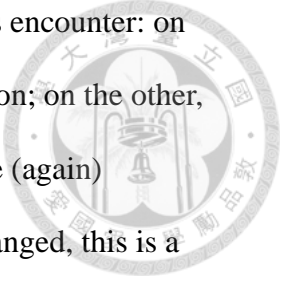
At the end of *Model Minority Imperialism*, Victor Bascara presents a way of approaching these links. Taking note of the publication date of *Heart of Darkness* in 1899, which coincided with Rudyard Kipling’s notorious poem “The White Man’s Burden: The United States and the Philippine Islands,” Bascara is able to highlight the similarities between Belgian imperialism and the actions of the United States in the Philippines at that time. Following an Asian American critical trajectory, Bascara

asserts that “these connections allow us to draw links between locations and periods through the recognition of epistemologies of empire that are epistemologies of our current world order,” and that these “substitutions and their imperfect fidelity to their presumed originals present an opportunity to apprehend new subjects amid old epistemologies, and old subjects among new epistemologies” (139).



In other words, by stitching these different locations and narratives together in comparative examination, the similarities between American actions and the colonial powers of old can be revealed and perhaps redefined. The Philippine-American War of 1899-1902, as Bascara points out, is one of the few occasions where this link is made transparent. However, that War should not be viewed as the only event that implicates the US; as we can infer from the associations via the works of Francis Coppola and Hagedorn, the war with the Philippines is only a prototype of the conflicts to come, in Korea, in Vietnam and Cambodia, or in the more recent escapades in the Middle East. Moreover, US imperialism does not always manifest in outright conflict either, as seen in the earlier discussion on the filming of *Apocalypse Now* and its critical portrayal by Hagedorn. Indeed, as I have suggested in this chapter, Francis Coppola’s attempt at promoting an anti-war message ended up running opposite to his supposed purpose, from re-affirming exclusionist justifications to arguably valorizing violent, absurd, Wagnerian warfare.

However, in re-enacting the problematics that plagued the Tasaday fiasco and the production of the Coppolas, we can observe some aspects in Hagedorn’s project that recall the events that she is parodying. As noted at the beginning of Chapter Two of this thesis, Hagedorn began her research for the novel with a trek into the jungle and an interview with the Tasaday. Although one can hardly accuse her of the sort of callousness or obliviousness found in the likes of Manuel Elizalde or Francis Coppola,



there is nonetheless a recognizable power relation that structures this encounter: on one side, the American subject who wields the power of representation; on the other, the “lost” group of underprivileged subjects whose stories need to be (again) recuperated. While the nationalities and circumstances may have changed, this is a pattern that has been repeated in possibly every recorded encounter with the Tasaday, and Hagedorn is no exception. Furthermore, if one follows Robin Hemley’s interpretations of the Tasaday incident, Hagedorn’s version of the “Hoax” where Elizalde/Zamora confesses fraud and sole responsibility then becomes a re-inscription of the questionable story spread by Oswald Iten and his informant Joey Lozano, a story that seeks to strip the Tasaday of their legal protection.⁴⁷ Another problematic approach is Hagedorn’s conflation of two distinct tribes into a single group of people in her fictional project. Historically, the Tasaday controversy is sparked by the accusation that they were T’boli people dressed up as cavemen. In Hagedorn’s version, these T’boli are translated into the fictional Himal people.⁴⁸ When she represents the film production, the Himal again make an appearance as extras for the scenes set in the temple compound (278). However, the actual indigenous group that was hired for the occasion on 1976 was not the T’boli, but the Ifugao people.⁴⁹ Although one can defend Hagedorn’s conflation as an oversight or a justified dramatic interpretation, it still suggests an ethos of interchangeability that is reminiscent of the discourses that she critiques.

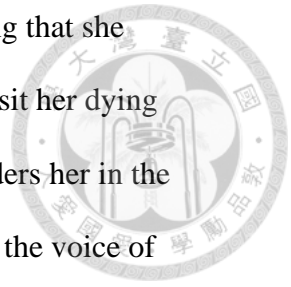
But the final question I wish to pose in this chapter concerns the fate of the character Rizalina, whose narrative ends with her “escape” to the US and the terse

⁴⁷ The legitimacy and motives powering this story is discussed in Hemley 299-305.

⁴⁸ On page 155 of *Dream Jungle*, Paz Marlowe asks Zamora, “[w]ere the Taobo nothing more than members of the Himal tribe, made to look primitive and coached by you and your staff to speak gibberish?”

⁴⁹ For a discussion of the Ifugao tribe’s participation in the production, see Eleanor Coppola’s *Notes* 144-45

line: “I am happy now. I want to stay happy” (312). It is worth noting that she declines to disclose her job, refuses to return to the Philippines to visit her dying mother or the daughter she left behind, and this last appearance renders her in the third-person rather than the first; the chapter being narrated through the voice of Sonny, an old acquaintance and bodyguard of the late Zamora. Hagedorn may have avoided portraying Lina as a passive object of rescue, but the use of the US as an unspecific, inscrutable safe haven where one presumably lives happily ever after is nevertheless unsettling. In other words, even as it lays bare the projects of the Tasaday “Hoax” and the filming of *Apocalypse Now*, Hagedorn’s novel arguably re-inscribes imperialist assumptions and continues to be necessarily implicated in a chain of representations.



Chapter Four



As pointed out by critics including Oscar V. Campomanes and Kandice Chuh, the Philippines, Filipino Americans and their literature occupy an uneasy and often overlooked position with regards to the framework of Asian American studies. This invisibility of the Philippines, as Campomanes argues in “Filipinos in the United States and Their Literature of Exile,” is in part due to contradictions within the formations of the Asian American category. As we observed in the case of the controversial critical study *The Empire Writes Back*, however, the island nation also suffers from negligence in postcolonial discussions as well, due to its problematic century-long entanglement with the US and the difficulties involved in identifying and even acknowledging that turbulent relationship.

As Victor Bascara suggests, the disastrous Philippine-American War of 1899-1902 that initiated this relationship presents an opportunity to apprehend the US in the act, so to speak, of an imperialist project that is consistently denied but continues today, despite the formal independence of the Philippines and its constitutional refusal to permit US garrisons on its soil.⁵⁰ Jessica Hagedorn’s novel *Dream Jungle*, however, foregoes an extensive study of the history of that genocidal conflict and references it only in passing through narration provided from an objectionable and unreliable character, Mayor Fritz (257-59). Instead, as I have discussed, Hagedorn foregrounds the complexities of the Philippine-US relationship through the fictionalization of two seemingly unrelated real-life events in the island nation: the 1971 Tasaday “Hoax” and the filming of *Apocalypse Now* from 1976-1977.

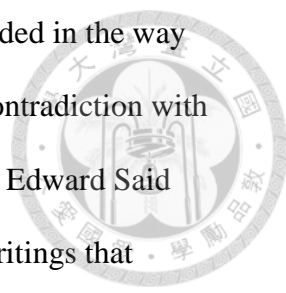
⁵⁰ Chalmers Johnson details the ratification of the constitutional articles that oppose and finally led to the eviction of US bases, but also notes the continued US stratagems to extend its presence in the nation; see 212-14.

I have attempted to address these events and their representations in *Dream Jungle*, much like the novel focuses its attention on one event in each of its main parts.

At first glance, the Tasaday story appeared to be a stereotypical case of a postcolonial/indigenous hoax, complete with the characteristic of fooling media giants like *National Geographic* and NBC. Re-tracing the footsteps of Manuel Elizalde into the jungle that prompted the 1971 “Discovery,” Hagedorn’s interview with the allegedly fake tribe did not sway her from again inscribing the incident as a mischievous prank on the part of Elizalde—and the fictional Zamora.⁵¹ My discussion of this topic in Chapter Two, however, pointed towards the process of media representation as the more likely culprit, a process in which Filipino-American journalist Paz Marlowe—arguably Hagedorn’s stand-in character—is inevitably implicated. I then turned to the work of Victor Li to identify an attribute and ideal—primitivism—that has persisted throughout the Tasaday incident’s conception and subsequent disavowal. A form of neo-primitivism, as Li calls it, continuously re-emerges in conflicting discourses and—as I attempted to point out—is accurately embodied in the Tasaday/Taobo story detailed in Hagedorn’s rendition. In the context of my thesis project, this neo-primitivism also critically serves as a contrasting medium in my examination of seemingly innocent texts that in fact contribute to re-inscribing concepts that they ostensibly oppose, a process that leads us to Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness* and one of its reinscriptions, Francis Ford Coppola’s film *Apocalypse Now*.

Nevertheless, before diving into textual analysis, it was necessary to trace the concept of reinscription and its complicated formation. The imagery of the palimpsest, supplied by Victor Bascara, provides a clue that helped unfold the significance of

⁵¹ For Hagedorn’s depiction of the Tasaday/Taobo incident, see *Dream Jungle* 123, 308, 319.



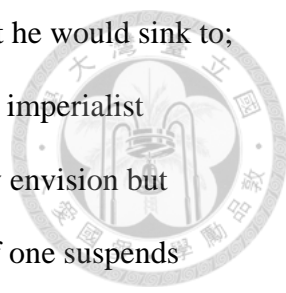
reinscription in terms of the historical as well as the personal, grounded in the way that different narratives and memories would co-exist in apparent contradiction with each other. Appropriating this concept into a postcolonial trajectory, Edward Said famously mobilized the term reinscription to encompass resistant writings that respond to and “write back” to the center (210-16). In terms of its form, the film *Apocalypse Now* could be loosely categorized as such a Saidian reinscription, as it was inspired by Conrad’s novel *Heart of Darkness* and rearticulated in a response to European colonial discourse. Nevertheless, much like Hagedorn’s attempt in *Dream Jungle* to critically recreate the production, my analysis began to reveal layers upon layers of problematic practices inherent in the production of Francis Coppola’s film. As a result, I remained unconvinced of its supposed anti-war subversive message, arguing that the production of *Apocalypse Now* functions as a “reinscription” in the way that it re-inscribed US imperialism and even re-staged the US invasion of the Philippines in 1899 through its rampant exploitation of the people and the landscape.

However, it is necessary to point out that my reading can be unsettled by noting the fact that Francis Coppola, to a certain extent, was aware of this process of negative re-inscription that he and his project were implicated in. His infamous 1979 Cannes conference pronouncement, boasting “my film is not about Vietnam. It *is* Vietnam,” was followed by the confession that

The way we made it was very much like the way the Americans were in Vietnam. We were in the jungle, there were too many of us, we had access to too much money, too much equipment, and little by little, we went insane.⁵²

Indeed, Francis Coppola suggested in an interview in the *Hearts of Darkness*

⁵² This press conference is shown in the beginning of the *Hearts of Darkness* documentary.



documentary that in some ways, he anticipated the degradations that he would sink to; he *wanted* to embrace the mindset and position that came with a US imperialist expedition into the jungle, because it would allow him to not simply envision but actively live out the decadence that his film was trying to capture. If one suspends suspicion that this is an excuse cooked up after-the-fact, then it can perhaps be argued that Francis Coppola intentionally participated in this re-inscription which, while undeniably exploitative and destructive, did in fact accurately represent the depths that the Vietnam War had sunk to. Hagedorn, for one, does not buy into this explanation, and her fictional version of Francis Coppola—Tony Pierce—strikingly lacks self-awareness of the irony of his own transformation into a Kurtz, an “Emperor of the Jungle,” even as his fictional film supposedly critiques that mindset (236). In contrast, Janet Pierce—the character standing in for Eleanor Coppola—exhibits some resemblance of self-critique in her documentary and journal, projects that work to expose the excesses on the set. As my reading of the diary chapter revealed, however, Hagedorn remains skeptical and critical of these projects, and her narrative strategy in *Dream Jungle* suggests a reading that would connect these projects with Spanish colonial records. In other words, awareness of complicity does not clear the figure of Janet/Eleanor of responsibility.

In contrast to the problematic projects of Tony/Francis Coppola and Janet/Eleanor Coppola, my thesis turned to the peculiar chapter focusing on the figure of Pilar in *Dream Jungle* as an alternative reinscription that resists the written and the visual medium in its form as an oral history, and articulates a local point of view without descending into nationalist revisionism or primitivism. Again, however, I am obliged to scrutinize my reading. In my hurry to clear Pilar of any traces of primitivism and uphold her text as a potentially subversive form of reinscription, one

could argue that I have subscribed to the movement that Victor Li identifies as a “neo-primitivist turn,” as referenced in Li’s book title. Indeed, my thesis does undeniably contain a number of damning traits that are characteristic of neo-primitivism, as seen in my critical disavowal of the problematic applications of primitivism in both its favorable and unfavorable interpretations, along with the necessary “strategic primitivism” with which I postulated a radical alterity—in Pilar’s oral history—as a localized narrative that presumably could not be subsumed into the center. However, as Li points out in his book, “[t]o dismiss the primitive Other is thus to dismiss theory itself, a price we may be unwilling to pay” (226). In my defence, then, my lapse into neo-primitivism is perhaps unavoidable, and even critically necessary. In a similar fashion, I must also acknowledge that my thesis constitutes yet another form of reinscription, a continuation in Bascara’s line of associations (139). Even as my discussion disavows and critiques certain sources and texts, I am at the same time re-inscribing them back into circulation.

Finally, a question that could arguably most critically unsettle my project would be to call attention to my position as an aspiring scholar in Taiwan, and to ask “why the Philippines?” It is unfortunate that—with some notable exceptions—the Philippines seems invisible to many scholars in Taiwan, much like the way it appears to be neglected in Asian American critique as well as the postcolonial project put forth in studies such as *The Empire Writes Back*. It is even more unfortunate to note that the relationship between Taiwan and the Philippines recently deteriorated to a low point in May 2013, when the Taiwanese government imposed a series of sanctions against the Philippines.⁵³ In addition to state-directed actions, the Taiwanese public was

⁵³ These maneuvers were in response to an incident in contested waters between the Philippine coast guard and a Taiwanese fishing boat. In the altercation, 65-year old fisherman Shuh-cheng Hung was shot dead after his boat allegedly resisted arrest.

outraged and some groups urged consumers to boycott everything Filipino.⁵⁴ Although the sanctions were eventually lifted following official apologies and compensations from the Philippines in August 2013, the relationship between the two nations remains strained. In this context, it is all the more imperative to ask, “why the Philippines, and why now?”

In his “Editorial Introduction: Between Nations and across the Ocean” in a 2012 special issue of *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies*, Chih-ming Wang argues for a reorientation of Asian American studies to view Asia as “a geo-historical nexus and interactive plurality” (165). Wang draws upon the critique formulated by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak in *Other Asias*, which observes that the Asian American ideal of Asia subscribes to “a superficial and precarious multiculturalist solidarity” which threatens the plurality that this continent embodies (qtd. in Wang, “Editorial Introduction” 166). As part of this movement to re-emphasize Asian plurality, Wang urges us to re-examine the relationship between Asian countries, arguing that

the rediscovery of inter-Asian interaction and the mutual referencing of their American experience may serve as method to arrest US-Asia transposition of power and ideology and to counteract, disrupt, and terminate those Cold War determinations that still haunts us today. (173)

This thesis, then, follows Wang’s injunction to reach out towards another Asian country, whose relationship to us is often forgotten in Taiwan, and even greeted with hostility and/or denial.

Indeed, Taiwan’s entanglement with the Philippines goes beyond the economic treaties and labor distributions and can be observed in the ties between indigenous populations, whose languages belong to the same Austronesian family. A particular

⁵⁴ For an example of such activities, see the news article by Choi.

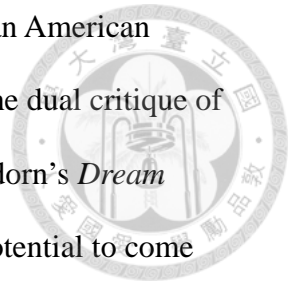
example of this kinship can in fact be found in Hagedorn's novel, in the fictional tribe Taobo that stands for the Tasaday, which recalls the Tao people of Taiwan's Orchid Island.⁵⁵ In Hagedorn's work, then, an unlikely but relevant connection can be discerned, despite the perceived gap between the two island nations. In addition to the indigenous links, the histories of Taiwan and the Philippines provide further clues to their implicit affinity that is not obvious at first glance. Both nations were at one point colonized by the Spanish, and both underwent an extended period of martial law under nationalist, dictatorial regimes that were allied with the US. Both nations were intimately entangled with the imperial strategy of the US in the Pacific, both housed large US military bases during the Cold War, and both ultimately saw the withdrawal of US troops from their islands.⁵⁶ In light of these connections, I therefore wish to argue that the issues I have focused upon in Hagedorn's novel are not only relevant but vital to a re-thinking of Taiwan's distinct yet similar predicament regarding its relationship with the US, and the question of hegemony and imperialism that is implied in that relationship.

In his recently published study *Transpacific Articulations* (2013), Chih-ming Wang calls for a reconceptualization of Asian American studies that requires "forms of collaboration and dialogue across contexts and traditions where issues of race and ethnicity will have to take into account the nightmares of empire and inter-Asian conflicts" (131). These considerations, along with the particular trans-pacific location(s) embodied by what he calls (drawing on the work of David Palumbo-Liu)


⁵⁵ As pointed out in *Dream Jungle*, the name of Taobo comes from a mishearing, a coinage from the actual utterance: "[t]hey call themselves *Tao, po.*' Human beings" (123). Earlier in her narrative, Hagedorn referenced the "*po,*" which comes from Tagalog as "an afterthought, to signify respect" (10). Therefore we are left with "*Tao,*" which in most Philippine languages simply signifies people. On Taiwan's Orchid Island, the indigenous people formally known as the Yami have urged for a renaming of their tribe to the "Tao"—again signifying human beings.

⁵⁶ For comparisons between Taiwan's and the Philippines' similar troubles with US military bases, see Johnson 152 and 203.

Asian/Americans, would offer “the possibility of reconfiguring Asian American transnationality as an articulation of discrepant relations to enable the dual critique of US imperialism and Asian nationalism” (131). My reading of Hagedorn’s *Dream Jungle* suggests that Wang’s proposal of this dual critique has the potential to come into fruition, articulated through the apprehension of US imperialism and Philippine nationalism in events such as the Tasaday fiasco and the making of *Apocalypse Now*. Viewed through such a trajectory, then, my thesis can stand as one attempt to respond to Wang’s conceptualizations, hopefully enabling future studies that inevitably would yet again encounter the question of doing Asian American research in Taiwan.



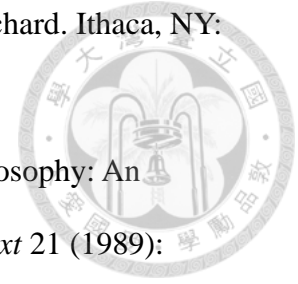
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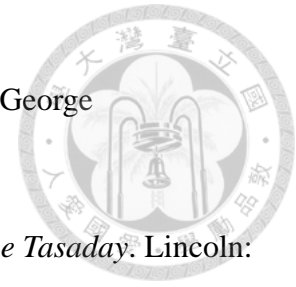
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